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# the christian SCHOLAR



## THE CHRISTIAN IN PHILOSOPHY

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**Charles Hartshorne**

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# The Christian Scholar

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**Quarterly Publication of the**  
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## The Christian in Philosophy

There are certain sunlit days when one who is committed both to the enactment of the Christian Faith and to the "doing of philosophy" entertains the sanguine thought that perhaps in our time the enmity between Theology and Philosophy—upper case deliberate—will be, if not laid to rest, at least understood!

More than forty teachers of philosophy met from June 17th to 30th last year at Denison University for the first Seminar in the relation of Christian faith and the field of philosophy. It was sponsored jointly by the Danforth Foundation and the Faculty Christian Fellowship. Some of the papers which were presented at this seminar appear in this issue of *The Christian Scholar*.

The primary aim of the program was that of exploring a wide variety of current issues and problems in philosophy from the standpoint of their relation to Christian perspectives. A diverse range of philosophical positions, relative to these issues and problems, was brought into the scope of the Seminar. Intensive work was done largely through the presentation of lectures and papers, with extended periods for discussion of central theses; much of the time was free for informal conversation, private study, unplanned discussions of the teaching of philosophy, and recreation. Another aim was that of determining several of the primary issues or questions which should be given further consideration by those who would better understand the relationship between Christianity and the field of philosophy. Another seminar is to be held this summer on the west coast; and possibly a third one will be held in the central part of the country in 1957 or 1958.

Recurrent thought and discussion centered around the relation between revelation, as the self-identification of God and His prerogative alone, and theism, as the metaphysical system capable of resting upon its own rational foundations the knowledge of God. This was the major theme of a series of lectures by Professor Julian N. Hartt of Yale University. Other papers dealt with problems in metaphysics, philosophy of religion, ethics, and analytic philosophy. There appeared to be, in fact, a gradual development from questions of largely metaphysical importance toward questions of critical importance during the latter part of the seminar. Such specialized subjects as the relation of Christianity to science, to history, and to ethics were also treated. The undergirding concern throughout the seminar was with an attempt to define "the task of the Christian in philosophy."

Though no one position is "the" Christian position in philosophy, there was considerable agreement that certain problems can be selected which appear to be most fruitful currently for the on-going dialectical task. For example, the feeling was widely held that there needs to be work toward a theory of religious expression or an analysis of the nature of religious statements. Another concern is the stake which Christians sense in certain schools of philosophy—some as Realists, some as Idealists, and increasing numbers as Existentialists.

The present issue of *The Christian Scholar*, both as to quality and orientation, makes some of our more sanguine thoughts seem plausible.

## The Task of the Christian in Philosophy

JOHN E. SMITH



VERY DISCUSSION in which Christianity is brought into relation to some special branch of knowledge or sphere of secular life is bound at the very same time to raise the more fundamental and perennial question of the relation between Christianity and culture. It will be well in the present instance, however, if we keep that more extended question in the background while seeking to direct attention instead to the more circumscribed subject with which it is the main purpose of this paper to deal. Our chief concern is with the aims and tasks of the Christian who is at present engaged in teaching and writing about the meaning of philosophical ideas and systems and in thinking with some originality about significant philosophical problems.

The first question we need to ask ourselves is whether there are any special problems involved in the relation between Christianity and *philosophy* which might not also arise for the relation between Christianity and, let us say, physics, mathematics or psychology. Where these subjects are concerned, the principal task of the Christian is to be a good physicist or mathematician, remaining faithful to the aims and methods of these disciplines, being careful not to attempt to dictate conclusions on the basis of religious considerations. It should be obvious that the relations between Christianity and most of the special sciences will be largely *external* and that they do not cease to be so until reflection enters and philosophical extrapolation begins. In this regard the Christian in physics or mathematics will be concerned, as a Christian, in these subjects only in so far as there are philosophical implications to be drawn from them, that is, only in so far as their conclusions are related to a general theory of the cosmos and of man's place in it. Tillich is right when he points to the pivotal position of philosophy between theology and the special sciences. "The point of contact," he writes,

between scientific research and theology lies in the philosophical element of both, the sciences and theology. Therefore, the question of the relation of theology to the special sciences merges into the question of the relation between theology and philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

With the Christian in philosophy itself, however, the situation is more complex and subtle, and both the complexity and the subtlety point to greater promises and perils. The fact is that Christianity and philosophy, quite apart from the details of their long historical association, are what we may call "near relations." Their exchanges with each other, if we may continue the figure, take place within the family and, as everyone is aware, near relations are capable of both more intimate cooperation and mutual antagonism than is possible either for

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<sup>1</sup> *Systematic Theology, I.* p. 18

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casual friends or total strangers. Philosophy, unlike most of the special sciences, overlaps the borders of religion and theology, a fact which is most apparent at times when philosophers are devoting the majority of their attention to their classical *metaphysical* tasks. It is the overlap which in the past has so often led to both mutual cooperation and mutual suspicion.

Time and again Christianity has rejected philosophy because it sees that philosophy, in virtue of its comprehensiveness and scope, has the capacity to function as a substitute for religion, thus rendering it superfluous and irrelevant for large numbers of thoughtful people. Philosophy, on the other hand, has often sought to cut itself off from Christianity because of the fear that Christianity seeks to supply answers to some of the fundamental questions simply by appeal to the pronouncements of an authoritative church or to the contents of a set of sacred writings. When this set of circumstances prevails, philosophy feels that its own rational quest, marked as it is by patience and dialectical persistence, is made useless and of no account.

History has shown, however, that antagonism and suspicion between the two does not sum up the whole story. The two can and have dwelt together in a relationship which has been fruitful; philosophy has contributed critical clarification as well as supplying categories and concepts out of which constructive theology was first achieved, while Christianity has contributed its distinctive concerns and convictions, keeping philosophical thought focused upon the speculative questions, those questions which ask about the foundation of existence itself. My own belief is that what is most necessary at the present time is a reconsideration of the positive or constructive relationship between the two for, among other reasons, it is only upon such a basis that a Christian can be both a Christian and legitimately engaged in philosophy at the same time. If no such basis can be agreed upon, Christians in philosophy may indeed still exist, but the two allegiances will have to remain radically distinct and the sides will either be irrelevant to each other, or one will have to be sacrificed to the other, for it is still true that two cannot walk together if they have no common understanding between them.

Moreover, the tasks of the Christian in philosophy become impossible to fulfill unless there stands, as a basic presupposition acknowledged by each side, respect for the relative autonomy of the other. The nature of autonomy and the crucial problems it poses in a situation where ultimacy itself is part of what is at issue cannot, of course, be dealt with here, but it is essential that both Christianity and philosophy retain a certain autonomy in relation to each other. In this regard, before entering upon a detailed account of the tasks of the Christian in philosophy, the situation will be greatly clarified if we note three approaches to the problem which, although they have had and still do have strong support, nevertheless make a positive and fruitful exchange between the two impossible.

First, there is the position of complete or radical separation in which the auton-

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omy of each side is expressed in its having nothing whatever to do with the other. Here we are supposed to have two wholly distinct sets of problems and bodies of doctrine, such that one may work legitimately within one or the other, or even in both, as long as it is explicitly understood that there is to be no logical dialectic between them; *dialectic* being taken to imply mutual analysis and criticism. From the vantage point of Christianity, this solution means that theology, either as a whole, or in some special part, is beyond all criticism from the "wisdom of this world," and from the standpoint of philosophy it means either that religion has nothing whatever to contribute to philosophy or that philosophy is being taken as so completely a rational pursuit that it cannot be asked to take seriously any claim to the discovery of truth through the medium of revelatory events or persons. This solution, it is sometimes claimed, is superior to any other because it logically delimits the spheres thus protecting the integrity and autonomy of each. What those who defend this view (or some variation upon it) do not always take pains to point out is that, if it does preserve the distinctness of the spheres, the division is achieved at the cost of making each irrelevant to the other, regardless of the extent to which they may appear to be influencing each other on the surface. Christianity and philosophy have nothing to do but go their separate ways, each supposedly respecting the other while at the same time that each is seeing to it that the other has nothing to do with the conduct of its internal affairs. On this view, it is obvious, there really is and can be no Christian in philosophy.

The other two untenable views are the reverse of each other and they are untenable because both violate the basic principle of mutual autonomy and respect. First, there is the view in which Christianity sets itself up in uncompromising fashion as having primacy over philosophy and indeed over all secular thought. According to this view, Christian theology forms a system of certain propositions in no way dependent upon philosophy, either in form or content, and philosophy is regarded merely as an enterprise based upon the presumption of human reason to be competent enough to attain truth concerning God, man and nature. Philosophy on this view is not necessarily set aside for it may be used as an apologetic tool for theology and the justification for such a procedure is the primary status of theology among all disciplines. Philosophy is thus reduced to the level of a means for communicating a truth already possessed at the same time that it is deprived of the power to make any contribution, critical or constructive, to the content thus communicated. This proposed solution cannot stand because philosophy is denied as philosophy and, furthermore, it leads to a form of bad apologetic which is little more than special pleading. Quite apart from the fact that this sort of apologetic never convinces those to whom it is principally addressed, it soon exposes itself for what it is, a pretense at being philosophical which is neither serious nor altogether honest. Thoughtful people see that the attempt to communicate religious beliefs through the medium of a philosophy which has been, as it were, previously disinfected or shorn of its critical powers, is a sign of fear and of religious bankruptcy. In such a situation philosophy resists, and rightly so, being assigned the

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status of a means for achieving a goal it has no part in framing. On this view, the Christian in philosophy is driven into the unenviable and impossible position of action as a "fifth columnist" in the ranks of worldly wisdom.

The reverse view, we may say at once, is equally indefensible. Here we find philosophy attempting to set itself up as the final arbiter of all questions of experience and existence with the result that Christianity, both as experience and as doctrine, is accorded no independent place of standing. The refusal on the part of the philosophy to admit the claim of Christianity may result from either of two developments within itself. It may come from the narrowing of philosophy to the proportions of a discipline interested only in questions of logic, epistemology and semantics, in short, from a philosophy which has taken a decidedly anti-metaphysical turn, or it may come from a too rationalistic view of constructive metaphysics, as tends to be the case in Hegel, for example, but in both cases the result is the same. To be sure, the situation is far worse when the rejection of the claim of theology comes as a result of philosophy's having become positivistic, than is the case when an unchecked metaphysical rationalism is the case. For in the latter case there are at least possibilities of discussion and creative tension, both of which are in principle precluded when philosophy stands upon wholly positivistic ground. Whichever reason is uppermost at a given time, however, makes no difference to the basic principle, that there cannot be a positive, creative relation between Christianity and philosophy when the later refuses to acknowledge the legitimate autonomy of the religious standpoint. On this view, the Christian in philosophy is driven to the position where he can introduce the religious pole into his thought only at a cost of being denied by his colleagues the status of a genuine philosopher. In addition, the consequence for philosophy is further impoverishment, because the supposedly universal character of the experience upon which all philosophy must depend is deprived of its religious dimension.

Whatever the truth about the relation between Christianity and philosophy may be, it should be fairly clear that the three alternatives just sketched must be rejected. The two cannot remain in complete isolation, nor can we rest with a solution in which either one dominates, thereby reducing the other to the status of a means or a tool. If the relations of separation and subordination are excluded, there remain only the possibilities either that Christianity and philosophy are to be fused in a so-called "Christian philosophy" or that the two are to remain distinct and autonomous in relation to each other, at the same time that they engage in mutual criticism and mutual aid to each other. I believe that only the last alternative contains the truth of the relationship and that it alone makes possible legitimate tasks for the Christian in philosophy. As for the idea of a "Christian philosophy," I shall have some comments to make on that matter later on, at which time I shall indicate why I think this solution is not tenable.

My aim now is to develop the meaning of the alternative I accept, first, by calling attention to two principles, and then by describing and illustrating six

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tasks which the Christian in philosophy can and must perform.

The Christian in philosophy can perform his tasks in the knowledge that Christian theology and philosophy have been related to each other *historically* and that they can be seen to be related to each other *essentially* as well. Throughout its history, Christian theology has developed in continuous relation with philosophy. In fact it is difficult to overestimate the importance of this connection. Of all the great historical religions, Christianity alone has developed *theology* with systematic rigor and with a logical conscience surpassing that of religions content to rely upon *mythos* alone. Its willingness to incorporate, along with the concept of *Logos* in the special Christian sense, what Tillich has called the *logos* principle in the universal sense, has made possible within Christianity more comprehensive and abiding formulations of religious faith than have been possible for traditions relying more exclusively upon ordinary language and mythological speech. Not only has the initial contact with philosophy been decisive for the form of Christian theology, but in every historical period significant Christian thinkers, alive to the demands of their particular situation, have used in their own work leading ideas and categories supplied by the creative philosophy of their own time. At present, even Karl Barth who has been so uncompromising in his rejection of philosophy, seems to recognize the validity of this point in his book on Protestant theology in the 19th century. And it is clear that his own thought, despite anything he may say, has been very far from developing in a vacuum; as time passes the involvement of his own theology in the basic thought of the philosophy of existence will become increasingly apparent. And this is the way it has always been.

Christianity is involved with philosophy not only historically but essentially as well, the relationship being based upon the intrinsic natures of the two enterprises. Christianity, as a faith deeply concerned with the world as it is, participates in and makes statements about a world which it shares in common with all men, Christian and non-Christian. There are no basic parts of Christian doctrine which do not make some reference to or imply some relation to this common world and to the human experience taking place within it. In setting forth its faith Christianity becomes involved at the same time in the general or pervasive structures of that world and that experience. These structures are pervasive in the sense that they determine to a specifiable extent certain aspects of the nature of whatever participates in them. It is, for example, impossible to construct theology without making use of such concepts as space, number, causality, freedom, nature, etc., but, while these concepts, when used for theology, will have to take on a meaning appropriate to the formulation of Christian faith, they are not themselves "Christian" concepts. They have been derived from general experience and from careful analysis of the world and human life open to men in all times and places. In order to think at all the Christian theologian must use these concepts, and their discovery and systematic connection is the proper business of the philosopher. It is this fact which makes the activity of the Christian in philosophy both possible and un-

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avoidable.

Let us turn now to the brief description and illustration of the six tasks which can and must be performed by the Christian in philosophy.

1. The foremost obligation of the Christian in philosophy is to be a good philosopher, to carry on the philosophical enterprise with the same standards of rigor and detachment which have characterized philosophical thought at its best throughout western history. For the Christian in philosophy can make his contribution only if he respects philosophy for its own sake and seeks to pursue its problems with candor. Without setting himself up as final arbiter, the philosopher can supply an "outside" criticism and appraisal of the Christian world view which may be used for purposes of clarification and comparison. If Hartshorne is correct, we may begin by defining metaphysics as a "rational and secular study of the universal traits of experience and existence,"<sup>2</sup> and follow him further in defining a "secular" study as one which "assumes no evidence other than such as is accessible to any intelligent man who *sufficiently* reflects upon our common human experience."<sup>3</sup> The Christian in philosophy must pursue philosophy in this secular sense and then seek to relate its conclusions in various ways to the classical content of Christianity. For he is attempting to see what plausibility and relevance Christian ideas have in relation to secular experience when they are subjected to critical comparison with a view of the world based, not upon the "special occasions" (to use the language of Whitehead) of Christian experience, but upon the "general occasions" of secular experience. The Christian in philosophy must dare to consider the possibility that the truths of Christianity when exposed to such critical comparison with an "outside" view can be shown to be both plausible and relevant from a perspective which is not, *in the first instance*, a Christian perspective. Perhaps two illustrations drawn from two different areas of philosophy will help to make the point more clear.

If the well known dictum of St. Paul, "The good I would, I do not . . ." is literally true and relevant to moral philosophy, then it is not true just for Christians, but should manifest itself in the general structure of human life, that is, it should become clear in the experience of *anyone* paying sufficient attention to his experience. If, to use a parallel case, we are not phenomenalists and do not believe that the world consists exclusively of what some philosophers call "sense data" but believe instead that there is an objective physical world, we shall not allow those who are phenomenalists to maintain that the world really is constructed of sense data in their case but not in ours. Not at all, we shall maintain that, if the thesis of an objective physical world is true, it is not true simply for those who believe it, but holds true for others as well, regardless of the view which they make take. So it is with the Christian in philosophy; he must see how the case stands from the secular perspective and then dare to consider the possibility that the Christian

<sup>2</sup> *Reality as a Social Process*, p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

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affirmations can be given a plausibility and relevance from this outside perspective.

To take a second illustration, if the Christian thesis that every created, finite being is contingent, in the sense of having the source of its being outside itself, is true, then again, it is not true just for Christians but should be manifest to anyone paying sufficient attention to his experience. The question which the Christian may ask as a philosopher is, is this truth manifested in general or secular experience, and can it be grasped from his outside standpoint as a secular philosopher? To the extent to which the general structure of the world and human life shows itself to possess just the character which Christianity either asserts or implies that it does have, we may be said to have a sort of confirmation of Christianity which is not derived in the first instance from the adopting of the Christian faith.

I do not say that the Christian in philosophy either can or should attempt to "prove" either deductively or inductively the truth of Christianity from general experience alone, but that from his secular perspective he has the possibility of critical comparison which may lead to an intelligible confirmation of the plausibility and relevance of Christian beliefs. If we as Christians refuse to admit the validity of this sort of critical comparison with a secular metaphysic, we are implying that the truth of Christianity does not in any way depend upon its exhibiting that truth in the structures of the world and of human life, but rather that its truth rests upon some wholly authoritarian or purely dogmatic basis.

2. The second task of the Christian is to attack all forms of narrow empiricism in philosophy and especially to fight against reductive types of philosophy which exclude metaphysics. The Christian in philosophy has a double allegiance, on the one hand to Christianity and on the other to philosophy. Narrow empiricism and reductionism seek not only to discredit religion, but to eliminate the constructive metaphysical aspect of philosophy as well. Sometimes Christian thinkers, either in the name of Biblicalism or as a result of their suspicion of philosophy, are tempted to side with the opponents of metaphysics within philosophy because they see an opportunity to destroy the pretensions of a form of thought they regard as a dangerous rival. I believe this is a disastrous point of view, for Christianity has a double stake in the survival of metaphysical thought. Christian thinkers are naive if they fail to see that attacks upon metaphysics are also attacks upon theology. It is not possible to acquiesce in the arguments which tend towards the elimination of metaphysics while at the same time supposing that theology can be preserved safe from these attacks, or that theology is untouched by these attacks.

Christianity has a second stake in the survival of metaphysical thought, for the most fruitful interplay between Christianity and philosophy can occur only when philosophy is concerned with the perennial metaphysical questions. This is not to say that critical philosophy—theory of knowledge, logic and analysis—have no creative relation to Christianity, but the fact remains that if we look to the

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past we can see that great theology has always developed in periods of immense metaphysical activity in philosophy. And we can see the implications of this in our own time; one of the embarrassments for the philosopher who wants Christianity to take philosophy seriously is that current philosophy has so little to offer in the way of constructive metaphysics. St. Augustine, Anselm, Bonaventura and Thomas Aquinas could carry on their creative dialectic with Plato and with Aristotle because they were the masters of the metaphysical tradition, but how is any such dialectic possible in our own day between Barth and Bertrand Russell!

3. The third task of the Christian in philosophy is to attempt to discover those particular philosophical views on specific problems which are *relevant* to Christian faith in the sense that the truth or falsity of these views implies the truth or falsity of certain contentions made by Christianity. To hold, as some current Christian thinkers do, that all philosophical assertions are equally distant from Christianity is the same as to say that all philosophy is equally irrelevant. But, as has been pointed out before, this position is untenable. Christianity has always to relate itself creatively to the scientific and philosophical thought of a given time, and it is of the utmost importance for theology that it keep aware of the stake it has in different interpretations made by philosophers of new discoveries in the investigation of man and the physical world. What, for example, are the implications for theology of the modern interpretation of the physical universe? Is the Christian world view in no way affected by the philosophical thesis that universal causality must be given up? What stake has Christianity in various philosophical interpretations of this situation? Or again, could Christian faith be held to be true in a world as externally related, or as loose-jointed, as the world of Hume and his followers is believed to be? And if we answer in the negative, as I believe we must, what view should Christianity take of the counter-thesis, so forcefully and carefully defended by thinkers like Bosanquet and Blanshard, that reality is one all-embracing system in which all the parts are internally related to all the others? If Hume's view makes the world ultimately unintelligible, does not the counter proposal make reality so completely transparent to reason that finitude, tragedy and sin must lose their meaning?

4. The fourth task of the Christian in philosophy is to pay attention to the critical side of philosophy—logic, epistemology, semantics—in order to be able to deal with problems concerning the truth value of religious affirmations, and particularly with the linguistic forms in which theology is cast and worship is carried on. One of the most significant developments in recent theology, for example, has been the re-emphasis upon the historical foundation of Christianity and upon its continuing concern for the historical process. I know of no philosophical study of greater importance at the present time than the philosophy of history, not so much in the grand sense of a speculative construction of the world-historical process, but in the humbler sense of a critical examination of possible differences between history as a form of knowledge and some of the natural sciences. There are a whole host of intricate problems surrounding the nature of historical knowledge,

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the meaning of an historical event, the connotation of such concepts as "unique" and "decisive" or "crucial." We need to know, for example, in what sense a given event or condition can be singled out as being "*more decisive than*" some other, or what is meant by the oft-repeated phrase "the presuppositions of the secular historian." Consideration of such critical questions marks the proper business of the Christian in philosophy, because responsible Christian thought cannot be content simply to take over common sense assumptions about these issues.

Another sphere of contemporary critical discussion in philosophy concerns the philosophy of language. Christianity can as little afford to neglect the human word as it can the divine word and, however difficult it may be to engage in modern linguistic philosophy without being swallowed up by the shallow metaphysics frequently to be found accompanying it, the Christian in philosophy can make an important contribution in this domain. Such questions as the nature of symbols, their relation to signs and to other devices used in expression, the function of imagination in religious thought, the status of myth and its relation to conceptual thought—these questions and countless others are the important ones. Consider, for example, the extent to which Protestant theology has been hampered by not having at its disposal any such neat and authoritative doctrine of religious expression as the Thomist doctrine of analogy. I am not overlooking the fact that the structure of Protestant Christianity precludes this sort of authoritative approach, but the fact remains that to have arrived at some clear ideas about the precise form and structure of religious assertions would greatly facilitate the work of the Protestant theologian.

There are other problems for the Christian in philosophy centering in the analysis and interpretation of language. Time and again, misunderstandings arise as a result of failure to attend to the different functions of language and to the different purposes for which they are introduced. More often than not attacks upon theology come from the uncritical use on the part of theologians themselves of *devotional* language in a context where *theological* language is called for. There is, to be sure, an intimate connection between these two types of language, but this fact should not be permitted to obscure the equally important consideration that their aims are not the same. The Christian in philosophy has the obligation of making such distinctions clearly, of calling them to the attention of theologians themselves and of incorporating them into such disciplines as the philosophy of religion.

5. The fifth task of the Christian in philosophy is that of acting as interpreter in the situation of misunderstanding between Christianity and the special branches of knowledge. Sometimes, especially in periods of deep alienation between different points of view and different approaches to the same subject matter, there is so complete a failure of communication that neither side has any clear understanding of what the other is talking about. It will be recalled that earlier in this discussion I referred to Tillich's idea that philosophy stands as a buffer between theology and the special disciplines. There is no more important office it can fulfill in this regard than to act as interpreter, to bring about clear understanding

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and dispel misunderstanding.

So many disputes, especially among those seeking to interpret the same material from differing points of view, flow from mutual failure to comprehend. It is not a matter of agreement or disagreement, in the first instance at least; it is more elemental than that. Agreement and disagreement are possible only when there is mutual understanding, but so often in the discussion of issues revolving around religion, there is no genuine basis for discussion because there is no initial understanding of what each side wants to assert. The philosopher, as Royce used to point out, can assume the role of interpreter and become something of a roving ambassador, using his powers on analysis and interpretation to help settle some of the border disputes so common in the intellectual and cultural world.

Out of the attempt at mutual understanding may come some surprising results of considerable importance for Christianity. It will be of importance, for example, if we can show that when the social scientists talk about the "cultural lag" they are discovering and expressing in their own language a truth which Christianity has always known, namely, that you do not transform the moral and spiritual natures of men simply by putting more knowledge and technical skill at their disposal, or merely by making it possible for all of them to vote. The discovery that two different minds or groups of minds, really mean to say very much the same thing although they express it in different language, is a matter of no small importance in a period when most minds seem readiest to misunderstand and mis-judge. The interpreting of one perspective to another perspective requires a third point of view, one not explicitly identified with the divided parties. The Christian in philosophy can well function as this third party in the protracted attempt to interpret Christianity to the modern mind. It must be acknowledged, of course, that understanding does not of itself lead either to agreement or to conviction, but it is equally certain that without such understanding, there can be no civilized adjudication of disputes, and the only alternative is that of naked force.

6. The sixth task of the Christian in philosophy is his obligation to show the contribution of the theological tradition to the history of western philosophy. There are in this domain a great many points of interpretation which need to be stressed. Mr. Casserley in his book, *The Christian in Philosophy*, has covered what needs to be done and he has offered excellent illustrations. Those chiefly concerned will be philosophers whose main work is in the history of philosophy. We are all familiar with the way in which the history of philosophy is most frequently taught, especially the period from c. 400 to 1500. Or perhaps we should say that we are all familiar with the way in which this period is not taught! More often than not it is passed over altogether or accorded nothing more than a superficial description summed up in some such catch slogan as "philosophy in this period was the handmaiden of theology." The latter treatment is bad enough, but almost as if to add insult to injury, those teaching the material in this way who are not trained in the development of theology are invariably in no position to interpret the cliché (which is true if properly interpreted).

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This task of the Christian in philosophy seems to me so important that I should like to offer several other illustrations of the sort of thing that needs to be done. Study of Enlightenment philosophy cannot be carried on without taking into account the pronouncements of many thinkers about Christianity, its history and doctrines. Whereas these Enlightenment thinkers thought they spoke in behalf of classical Christianity, it is clear to anyone acquainted with theology that what they regarded as the Christian view on this or that topic was often very far indeed from what actually was maintained in the classical creeds or by the great theologians. The difficulty is that the modern man is almost invariably ignorant of the discrepancy, which is why so many people at present are under the impression that the 18th century is one place to go if you want to discover what Christianity is all about. The situation is all the more tragic in view of the fact that it is largely unconscious; the modern mind still remains unaware of how far the Enlightenment really was from any living contact with classical Christianity. Try, for example, to tell the modern man, even the modern Christian, that Christianity is more concerned with the concept of eternal life than with that of immortality and he will most likely regard you with suspicion as an innovator. Failure to distinguish between Enlightenment views of Christianity and the classical tradition has played a large part in such shallowness and confusion. The Christian in philosophy engaged in historical work can do a great deal to remedy the situation.

Another example has to do with the tendency of some historical interpreters to lose patience and overlook what they regard as small differences and details where matters of religion and theology are concerned. Thus students are taught to speak of *the ontological argument for the existence of God* and in this connection it is usually the formulation of Descartes to which they have been introduced. The origin of the approach with Anselm and especially the absolutely decisive differences between his formulation and that of Descartes are not even mentioned. Nor is it made clear that there were other formulations of the ontological approach, Bonaventura, the Victors and the later Franciscans. Since this part of the historical account is generally passed over lightly anyway, most teachers feel no obligation to do better and the result is a permanent distortion. Here again, the Christian in philosophy can provide the necessary clarification and discrimination.

In bringing this discussion to a close it is necessary to make brief comment on the idea of "Christian philosophy." It has no doubt been noticed that all along I have spoken of "the Christian in philosophy" but I have not argued for a Christian philosophy, and the main reason is that I do not believe there can be such a discipline.

I shall not attempt to consider what Christian philosophy means in the Roman Catholic tradition nor shall I discuss the views of some recent attempts at Christian philosophy within the ranks of Protestant ultra-conservatism. There is, however, the suggestion that Christian philosophy represents the system of propositions expressing the views which Christianity would maintain on all matters pertaining

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to the world and its nature. Such a system would, presumably, be based solely on the Bible. What is not clear to me about this proposal is, what is the relation between Christian theology and this projected Christian philosophy? I fail to see what topics would be contained within the latter which are not treated in the former. Theology is not simply discourse about "God" and nothing else; it contains an elaboration of the full Christian world-view, including its relations to the cultural situation out of which it springs and to which it speaks. If this is so, what is left to be done by a so-called Christian philosophy?

There is a deeper objection to the idea of a Christian philosophy and it is this: if this enterprise is not a disguised form of theology, it can only be the claim to be the presentation of *the* Christian answer to classical philosophical problems and I find it very hard to see that there is any such thing as *the* Christian answer to a host of philosophical problems I can name. What, for example, is *the* Christian answer to the problem of internal and external relations, or to the mind-body problem, or to the problem of the validity of a genetic analysis of the nature of a thing, or to the issue between nominalism and realism—what, we may ask the Christian philosopher, is *the* Christian answer to any or all of these problems? I submit that no such answers are to be found because Christianity does not contain within itself as a religion of salvation the resources for providing a unique answer to these questions. I referred previously to the Christian *in* philosophy rather than to Christian philosophy just in order to deal with this problem. The Christian who is also a secular philosopher can ask for the *relevance* of certain philosophical solutions to the Christian faith and he can try to discover the extent to which Christianity is involved in various alternative interpretations proposed by secular philosophy. But there is no such thing as *the* Christian answer to the perennial problems of secular philosophy. Moreover, if the would-be Christian philosopher replies by maintaining that Christian philosophy is directed towards the answering, not of questions posed by secular philosophy, but of questions posed by Christianity, then I should want to know in what sense Christian philosophy differs from Christian theology, since Christianity is primarily a religion in itself and not a philosophical inquiry. If as Whitehead has suggested, Christianity is a religion seeking a metaphysic, that metaphysic, if found, will not be a Christian philosophy supposedly uniquely derived from the Bible, but it will be a secular metaphysic based upon the analysis of general occasions, which is compatible with Christianity. I would urge again that while there can be a Christian in philosophy, I do not believe there is or that there can be a Christian philosophy.

The problem raised here is at once so important and elusive that it will be helpful to offer an illustration which may make clear the particular view I hold of the relation between what has previously been called "secular" metaphysics and Christian thought. Let us take as our example the doctrine of Incarnation. No one, I believe, will deny that this doctrine is a legitimate and absolutely essential part of Christian theology. That is, no one, not even the most violent objector to

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secular or speculative metaphysics, will want to maintain that this doctrine is not a part of a biblically based theology but represents instead a metaphysical construction. As soon, however, as we seek to formulate the doctrine in a way which is more clear and critical than traditional devotional language permits, we are led to make some assertion as the following: There is an event or series of events within recorded human history which we describe as the appearance of the Christ, and this event is both a legitimate part of the historical process and a unique revelation of the meaning (in the sense of divine purpose) of that process as a whole. In this sample formulation (or in any similar one which purports to express the meaning of the Incarnation) there are at least three concepts—event, unique, history—whose meaning cannot be determined apart from a metaphysical or reflective analysis of human experience. We do not and cannot learn, for example, the meaning of a concept like “unique” from the Bible alone without recourse to an analysis of our general human experience. It is false to claim that the Bible alone<sup>4</sup> gives the Christian theologian an adequate account of the meaning of these concepts (including others in the previous formulation not mentioned, such as the troublesome “is” and all the connectives) and yet he cannot formulate clearly this most central Christian doctrine without making use of them. It follows that he must derive their meaning, *in part* at least, from *another* source. It is necessary to stress “in part” here since I am *not* claiming that the Bible itself and the general biblical perspective contributes nothing to the meaning of these concepts.

The “other source” in question will always be either common sense (“everyone knows what an ‘event’ is”) or some more critical and explicitly formulated metaphysical theory. It is important to notice that those who simply assume the so-called ordinary meanings current at a given time are inclined to believe that they are free of all metaphysics and “speculation.” This is not so. The distinction between the ordinary view and a critical metaphysics is not one of type or kind, since the ordinary view is itself (or contains) a theory of reality, but rather it is a distinction between the more and less explicit in thought. The fact is that common sense meaning always represents implicit metaphysics.

The problem which remains, and it is a problem which has determined the theological situation, whether consciously or not, in every period of thought, is this: *from what “other source” will the Christian theologian derive the meaning of concepts which are exhibited in all experience and are thus unavoidable, but whose meaning is not completely and uniquely furnished by the classical religious content which is given to him?* My own contention is that the theologian must look to the analyses of general experience furnished by philosophy for the meaning of those concepts which he always uses without at the same time being able to maintain that he is in possession of a single “Christian” meaning for them. And the principal

<sup>4</sup> If it is claimed that it is illegitimate to confine the theologian to the Bible alone, since he has the whole “Christian tradition” at his disposal, the reply is that the creedal formulations and theological constructions denoted by the expression “Christian thought” already involve the very dependence on philosophical analysis which is in question.

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reason why there is no such meaning is that Christianity is primarily a religion and not a metaphysic. On the other hand, as a religion it appears in a world and claims to be true of a world which is itself the appropriate object of metaphysical thought, except that the general metaphysics which would be wholly true about that same world is not contained within the confines of Christianity alone.

In looking to philosophy to supply what is not given to him from his own tradition exclusively, the theologian is not, however, forced to adopt uncritically the results which the philosopher offers. The theologian must attempt the difficult but inescapable task of deciding among the various alternatives which of the available views is compatible with the general Christian perspective. This is what was meant above when it was said that, since the view that *all* philosophical positions are equally irrelevant for theology is false, it becomes necessary for the theologian to decide which of the available views is relevant to and compatible with Christian faith. For example, a metaphysical theory of time and history which precluded the possibility of the temporal process being viewed as one whole or which made it nonsense for us to speak about *the* meaning of history would be inadequate for the Christian theologian and could not ultimately be used by him. But it does not follow from this assertion that all philosophy is equally useless. On the contrary, the twin fact that philosophy is unavoidable and at the same time inclusive of positions which are hostile to Christianity (or incompatible with it in some crucial respects) makes it imperative for the theologian to enter into a critical discussion or dialectic with philosophy aimed at the discovery of those philosophical analyses which are able to be used by him in the clear and critical formulation of his own basic doctrines.

There are, of course, many unsolved problems confronting the position I have just outlined, but I hope the preceding paragraphs have served to make more clear what was meant above by the doctrine that philosophy and theology are to remain autonomous in relation to each other at the same time that they engage in mutual aid and criticism.

As a final word I would say that the current tendency within Protestant Christianity to recover the classical content of the faith and to reassess the views of the great Reformers is a tendency with which I am in sympathy. Such a process of recovery is of the first importance. On the other hand, however, if Protestantism is willing to trade its cultural relevance and particularly its creative relation to philosophy simply for the recovery of its past it will have made the worst bargain in its history.

## What Makes a Philosophy Christian? A Liberal Speaks

PETER A. BERTOCCI



IT IS MY THESIS that there is a legitimate way, and an illegitimate way, in which a philosophy can be Christian—just as there is a legitimate and an illegitimate way in which a philosophy can be materialistic. Since much depends on what is conceived to be the role of philosophy in the affairs of men, I shall begin by defining what I conceive to be the purpose of philosophizing. I shall not define what I take the word "liberal" to mean, but let this become evident as the discussion proceeds.

It is not the task of the philosopher, as I see it, either to create, or to legislate for, reality. To philosophize is to seek that description of reality as a whole which is true, or as near the truth as anyone can get. The complete philosophical truth is beyond the reach of any human being. Each philosopher is one kind of existent, surrounded by many other kinds of beings, none of which he knows completely. The philosopher's initial act of faith is no different from that of any other person who believes that somehow he can discover "the things that matter most."

What is unique about the philosopher is an additional act of faith that sets his task off from that of other men. He believes that the only adequate way to find the truth is to gather all the data he can, from every corner of the world of human experience, and ask what contribution they make to the meaning of the whole. I call this an act of unique, philosophic faith and I shall show later why this is an act of reasonable, as opposed to blind, faith.

What I would emphasize, therefore, is that the philosopher cannot *as a philosopher* arbitrarily deny the witness of any aspect of experience, as if he had some prior insight into the true and the false. Let us assume, for a moment, that a philosopher said: "But I do have a prior insight based on a logico-mathematical process of analysis." He could immediately be asked: But can you show me that this process is intrinsically superior to a perceptual-aesthetic approach? What can the philosopher answer? Surely, not that there is some *prima facie* superiority which his logico-mathematical intuition has over the *prima facie* aspects of the perceptual-aesthetic. Any claim the philosopher makes that is arbitrary cannot be made in the name of philosophy; any truth-claim he makes he must justify only by showing that it takes better account of the rest of experience than any counter-claim. The philosopher can test the claims and counter-claims of the moralist, physical scientist, artist, or mystic, only by understanding their relations to each other and by a *review* of the experiences upon which those claims are made.

The philosopher is not less needy or desirous of belief than other men. He

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does not begin his investigation in a cultural vacuum, or without conscious and unconscious commitments and convictions. As a human being he stands with his fellowmen *in mediis rebus*, trying to discover what makes life worthwhile, and committing himself to what his past experience, training, and human intercourse have led him to believe is most meaningful. What makes him a philosopher, then? It is his willingness to subject every one of his beliefs, as far as he can, to criticism in the light of counter-claims made by others who emerge from their experiences with different results.

For him as philosopher, *any* belief, his own, or anybody else's, *any* belief, religious or non-religious, moral or immoral, and no matter how sincerely advocated or vigorously deprecated, is, as such, neither true nor false. Any belief or disbelief is subject to further criticism the moment it is seen that some other experience suggests different conclusions. This is to say that the philosopher takes every experience and belief seriously, and looks upon it not with green, suspicious eyes but with a determination to understand its testimony.

Thus, the underlying critical faith of the philosopher is that the more data he acquires, the more varied the evidence he can sift, the more likely he is to find the truth. His skepticism, if it lies anywhere, lies in his unwillingness to assume that any one part of his experience, sensory or non-sensory, logical or non-logical, religious or non-religious, can dictate, from its vantage point exclusively, what its own complete meaning is, let alone what the meaning of other experiences is.

### II

It is now time to ask: Is not this faith, that the whole of experience is more to be trusted than any part, arbitrary? The philosopher must confess, I concede at once, that he cannot prove ahead of time that this faith will be victorious. If there were nothing more to say, the philosophic claim that the whole will lend more insight than the part, would indeed be as arbitrary as the reverse claim.

But the philosopher can defend his claim by the actual experience of all human beings in the search for truth. He can point out that even within any one area of experience, be it religious or non-religious, no one experience is allowed to speak for all the rest. In what area of experience, do we not find conflicting interpretations of the supposedly same thing. How do we then proceed? Do we not accept that version which is consistent with the larger balance of experiences in that realm?

Again, in the name of no one experience can another experience be discredited. Any one experience as such cannot be tested by another, for every experience is what it is. But when any one experience is interpreted in a way that theoretically discredits the possibility of other experiences, which I, or someone else, is nevertheless having, what procedure do we follow? We certainly do not allow the first interpretation to legislate for other experiences upon which it is not based!

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Every experience has a right to face and be faced by its accuser. Assume that I believe a man is honest. Assume that I later find him to be dishonest about political affiliations. I certainly cannot conclude that the man, as a whole, is honest. But if I allow my first "discoveries" to stand for the whole, I am discrediting other "discoveries." To generalize, if our procedure in any one realm of experience leads us to judge any one moment, or any one portion, of it by the remainder, why should we not adopt this procedure for all experience, and seek to correlate the evidence, or data, or "revelations," of any realm of experience with the others?

We may now summarize the philosopher's predicament. He asks: What is the structure of the reality in which I live and to which I must conform my feelings, volitions, and thought? He does not know ahead of time by what avenue his best evidence will come, whether it will be through logic, or through sense, or by way of the moral, the aesthetic, or the religious (or any other) consciousness. These facets of his consciousness provide him, *prima facie* with different types of experience and his total response in each is freighted with suggestions (to say the least) as to what the nature of the world beyond himself is. His own nature, his cultural background, his own experience with life up to the point that he consciously sets out to philosophize, will no doubt create a predisposition in him to favor some area of experience more than others. His fundamental commitment, to trust the suggestions which accrue from the interweaving of all of his experiences, will force him to reconsider suggestions from only one experience or area of experience. A philosopher stakes his life on the thesis that he is more likely to find the truth by trusting (until he has strong grounds for not trusting) the whole of his experience as the inlet to the truth about reality. Perhaps he is being too sanguine about the potentialities of the whole. It may be that some one area is the highway to reality. He should realize that he is taking a calculated risk in thus trusting the whole rather than the part.

There is further justification, however, for considering this risk a better one than the alternative risk that some one part would be the more revelatory. If the philosopher decides to inspect every area assiduously, and then relate it to all the rest of his experience and knowledge, he may by this very procedure, discover that some one experience or area is more trustworthy than all the others. But if he assumes, in advance, that some one area, or some one type of experience, constitutes the exclusive highway to truth about reality, then the interpretation of other areas of experience is subordinated, without continued interrogation, to the preferred one. This is what happens, for example, when the naturalist makes the logical and experimental organization of sense-experience the highway to truth and expurgates, on this "public basis," the supposedly "private" insights of the religious consciousness. This is what happens when the religious consciousness asserts its insight as the authoritative source of truth about the nature of reality and morality. In both instances there is more trust in some area of experience to the condemnation of another realm; in both there is a lack of faith, if you will,

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in the essential validity and possible harmony of all the areas of experience as cooperative avenues to truth.

It should now be clear that the philosopher, as I see him, is not an anemic skeptic, anxious to clip the wings of angels, with shears sharpened on the grindstone of logic, while his more red-blooded brother in the fields of either science or religion, keeps close to the real facts and issues of life. He is a man committed to the fundamental trustworthiness of human experience as a whole; he is a man committed to the self-discipline of belief by faithfulness to all of the data at his disposal.

I have purposely emphasized the function of the philosophical man because I have wished as far as possible to avoid the historic debate between philosophy and religion on the one hand, and philosophy and science on the other. I see no philosophical basis for hostility to either religion or to science, and consider much of the debate to revolve around a *methodological dogmatism*. I am here decrying such dogmatism, and this, I believe, it is the essence of liberalism to decry.

Nor can the liberal dissociate the active, volitional components in the total process of knowing from the others. At the same time, he cannot assume that in knowing we take a series of photographic shots of a completed reality which our knowing in no way affects. More should be said on this matter, but I am simply suggesting pitfalls into which we easily fall whenever we cut up the knowing process into isolated parts or responses, or when we cut it off from the constant *interaction* with the challenging and nurturant environment. The person as a whole is at stake in acting and in knowing, in hoping and in despairing, and he cannot escape the human predicament of relating himself cognitively, emotionally, volitionally, and appreciatively to a world which will always transcend his understanding.

Yet if a man justifies his belief by referring to the mysteriousness of the universe, does he do more than expose his naiveté and immaturity as a person? We live within processes which are indeed mysterious, and will never be completely understood by us. But as long as we are alive in a mysterious world, and alive *to* it, we are forced, by the very fact that we are still alive and thinking, to assume that its mysteriousness is not intrinsically hostile to us. A philosopher does not deny mystery, but he does not glorify or stand in awe of mystery as such. He approaches it as part of the human necessity to adjust to it, with the purpose of better understanding exactly where the mystery lies. As Whitehead once said in class: the purpose of philosophy is not to reduce or dissipate all mystery but to corner it.

### III

In this context we ask the question: What makes a philosophy Christian? My answer would be: A philosophy is Christian in the sense that the philosopher, facing the mysteries of existence with all the responsiveness of which he is capable, and correlating all of the data available to him, including his own experience, comes

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to the conclusion that the essential insights of Jesus, about God and man, are true, and that the wise person will seek to guide his responses to God and man in the light of Jesus' teaching. In "the light of Jesus' teaching" here means not that he will conform in some mechanical manner to what he knows of Jesus and his teaching, but that he will seek to explore these insights and to implement them for his own life and for his neighbors. A Christian philosopher, on this view, is not a person who takes his own experience as a Christian, or the experience of the Christian community, as the *undeniable given* by which the rest of human experience is to be interpreted. He is a philosopher who, whatever his previous commitment and experience, Christian or not Christian, finds as a result of investigating the total claims of experience, that what he conceives to be the Christian view of the meaning of life actually throws more light on the nature of the whole than any other.

Obviously, it cannot be a purpose of this paper to defend any particular set of Christian tenets. It goes without saying that there simply is no definitive answer as to what *the Christian view of life* is, any more than there is a definitive answer as to what *the materialistic* or *the idealistic* view of life is. I can simply assert my own conviction that a Christian philosophy, in the most generic sense, goes beyond belief in a metaphysical spiritual Principle which unifies and gives direction to the structure of things, to a more specific conception of this metaphysical Being. The Christian metaphysical Being consciously binds all beings together by the norm of love. In a word, I believe that any philosopher would have a right to call himself a Christian if he believed that the fundamental purpose in the world is a process of conscious Love—love, joyous and creative, love, suffering and redemptive. He in addition would believe that this conception of creative, long-suffering, and redemptive Love, as the only means by which men can fulfill themselves and find proper fellowship with God, was made clearest in the consciousness which Jesus had of God and in his main teachings as we have them. What I would emphasize, as critical and essential in the Christian view, is that quality of fellowship between God and man which makes self-giving and forgiving love imperative and normative. I believe that such a conception of the fundamental structure and norm of all being provides a crucial insight which enables us to see all the rest of experience with a minimum of distortion, and on these grounds I would consider myself a Christian philosopher.

I suspect that this view of the matter will be subject to two related criticisms. I may be told that I do not adequately recognize the fact that in Christian experience there is witness to a revelatory intrusion into history. The critic's argument might run something like this: "A Christian's belief is based on an event which at once sheds light on the nature of the universe and human existence, and also gives the person who commits himself to it the power to achieve a quality of sacrificial love for God and man which is not possible otherwise. What must be admitted into the purview of philosophy and theology is an initiating act or event which,

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momentous for human motivation, cannot be assimilated into the categories of human conceptualization as these apply to the remainder of human experience." At this point much might also be added about the limitation of intellect, about the "pride of reason," about the "offense," about the essential mystery, which is beyond reason, about the suspension of rational ethics. "Christian religious experience," it might be urged "has an autonomy which must forever resist attempts to consider it "one among others" in any way which would detract from its unique supremacy. Attempts to do this, as liberals have presumably done, have led to the watering down of the Christian revelation, to making God a human hypothesis. But we cannot judge God's way by human ways. We simply must not arrogate to man powers he does not have; we must be aware not only of the deficits in human nature but particularly of the inordinate selfishness in this nature."

I am sure I cannot do justice to the issues intertwined in such a rejoinder to me. But it seems to me that the essential issue is methodological and criteriological. What I conceive to be the essential liberal objection to such contentions, and, in any case, the one which I would want to advance, has to do not so much with the claims themselves but with the problem of validating these claims. As I see it, there is no *a priori* objection to such claims, and there is no denying that these claims are rooted in human experience. The question, however, is this. How does one know all these claims are true unless he has carefully analyzed them in the light of the rest of experience? If one is to make such claims responsibly, and as one sincere man among other sincere men, does he not need to face squarely the fact that contrary claims are made *within* the realm of so-called Christian experience? Many conflicting claims are made in the name of Christ, and if one seeks to find unity at all, he will find it difficult beyond asserting a theistic outlook. The stubborn facts are that claims are made for the Christian faith which leave one wondering what that faith comprises beyond the reference to the historical figure of Jesus.

The liberal then—as I see him—does not set out to water down an experience. After all, no experience as experienced can be diluted. But it is the liberal's respect for all experience as a guide to truth which makes him weigh carefully every experience and see experiences in their relation to each other. There is nothing in his method which precludes the possibility that God invaded history in Christ, but he and any other thinker must ask: On what grounds do we say God is in Jesus in a unique way—that is, what other experiences can live in *koinonia* if such a view is taken? Is the view of God envisioned through a given view of Jesus consistent with the views of God envisioned in the experiences of other moral and religious men?

When claims are made in the name of Christian religious experience which have to do with moral and aesthetic issues, and with cosmological issues, such as the relation of God to the world, then such Christian claims must enter the arena of appraisal and be judged by their capacity to solve both theoretical and practical problems. This means, for example, that natural morality and natural theology can-

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not be excluded from the attempt to decide what the truth in religion is, especially when there are conflicting views of what moral standards, and what conception of God, are supported by religious experiences. Unless the Christian, or any other religious believer, is to hold dogmatically that processes in the human being and the natural world can provide no evidence concerning the existence and nature of God, then what we know about human nature, what we know about its moral possibilities and achievements in interaction with the non-human world, may well be used to help arbitrate the differences between different views of God suggested by religious and Christian experience. The minimum use of natural theology and natural morality, let alone aesthetics, would then be to complete the conception of God felt to be revealed in religious experiences.

It would be a curiously distorted view of God, let alone of life, which maintained that the God who reigns over man and the universe does not show himself in them. Yet one of the most disappointing concomitants of the theology of the last quarter-century is its anti-metaphysical skepticism, a skepticism it shares, curiously enough, with its arch enemies, positivism and pragmatic naturalism. Yet if there is any doctrine which the religious believer can hardly afford not to reaffirm, it is that God is in his world and is to be found at work in it. Otherwise his religious affirmations must fail to keep contact with, and be relevant to, the other enterprises of God-made man.

## IV

At this point I shall be reprimanded, no doubt, by those who hold that there is no truth in the moral-aesthetic nature and experience of man apart from its being infused or permeated by experience "in Christ." It is I, the liberal, and not the neo-orthodox theologian and existentialist, who is separating God from man. For am I not suggesting that we can know man's moral structure and imperatives apart from his relation to the divine initiative?

Here is another large issue which is too important for even summary treatment,<sup>1</sup> but I cannot avoid pointing up the issue. What I should want to insist upon here, again, is the avoidance of methodological inflexibility. It may be that there is a radical discontinuity between the standard of moral judgment as found in Christian witness and non-Christian experience. But this cannot be asserted without full appreciation of the continuities of experience. It may be that the best in moral experimentation without belief in God does suggest a standard of love illustrated by the heroic in all ages and in all places. But do we proceed most carefully when we allow the either-or of supernaturalism or naturalism to gain control of our interpretations of experience in such a way that the experiences of men fall apart in exclusive classes? Why not, in our thinking, realize that critical reflection on moral experience and experiment, *including moral experiment with religious*

<sup>1</sup>See Peter A. Bertocci, "A Critique of Ramsey's *Basic Christian Ethics*." *Crozer Quarterly*, 29 (1952), pages 24-38.

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*experience*, may give sounder guidance than either so-called religious morality or naturalistic morality. No complete moral criticism of life can possibly avoid careful appraisal of the possible revelations given in religious experience and therefore in Christian experience. Yet I find such high qualities of moral dedication and insight in so many different sources and persons, believers and non-believers, that it seems to me arbitrary and, in any case, hazardous to allow religious moral experience to dictate to non-religious moral experience or vice-versa.

I am purposely avoiding certain critical epistemological issues here, and stating a methodological and criteriological point which I regard as fundamental. The single most vexing question in this area remains: Is the Christian moral insight dependent on his religious experience, or is the Christian experience interpreted in the light of the growing moral insight? Dogmatism in favor of a naturalistic or in favor of a supernaturalistic interpretation of moral experience is hardly in order where difficult issues are involved. I prefer here to begin with the fact that certain insights and experiences of value are within human experience and to interpret the world in which man finds himself in the light of these experiences. To say that these experiences come from God does not in itself establish their validity or invalidity for human action. A crucial consideration in my thinking is that the source of a moral insight is in itself no guarantee of its relevance or irrelevance to human experience. What makes any value experience worth obedience is its capacity to protect, better than any other, the totality of other relevant values, including creativity, in human experience. I would also argue that when men believe that the values to which they can give obedience are rooted in the structure of the universe itself, they find the greatest incentive for living in accordance with their ideal. But important as the motivational problem in ethics is, the even more important question is that of establishing an ethical ideal which does not arbitrarily neglect the different phases of human experience for which it becomes the norm.

### V

It may serve to clarify some of the orientations suggested thus far if I relate myself to several of the contentions in Professor Casserley's masterly book which I did not read until I came to this part of my deliberations. Casserley states that the real question he asked himself when he began to write this book were influenced by the fact that

I was already a believing Christian with deep-seated metaphysical tastes and interests. The questions which my experience of life propounded to me were these: 'What must be true about the world of man and human language in a world in which the Bible and metaphysics are both valid?' 'What must be true about the Bible and metaphysics separately if it is possible for the same person to devote himself to each of them without tearing his mind and soul in two'?<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>J. V. Langmead Casserley, *The Christian in Philosophy*, New York: Scribner's Sons, 1951, page 184.

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I find in Casserley no anti-metaphysical or anti-intellectual skepticism. He is willing to follow Kierkegaard's warning against mere objectivity but he insists that if men "are to find the truth at all they can only discover it through being profoundly and personally themselves, through exploiting the opportunities and possibilities of their own unique point of view to the uttermost."<sup>3</sup> For him subjectivity actually leads to objectivity, since he believes that "the man is profoundly himself will find within himself a craving for the objective."<sup>4</sup>

I find myself in hearty agreement with this statement insofar as it concerns the psychology of belief and *one type* of motivation for philosophy. I too began my philosophical reflection as one kind of believing Christian. Indeed my reflection and interest in philosophy gained momentum as I tried at first to save my adolescent faith from the contradictions I found within my version of it, and from conflict with a growing understanding of the world and human nature. But at every stage of further development it became crucial to distinguish between the psychological genesis and the *psychological convincedness* of my profoundest beliefs, on the one hand, and their *logical validity and truth-value*, on the other.

I do not for a moment deny that there is, and must be, an act of commitment involved psychologically, and, I would say, morally, in the venture of living for what one believes to be ultimate. I do not for a moment deny that in my life there are psychological roots of belief far deeper than I may realize. But because I know this, because I know that my ultimate stand is influenced by more factors than I may be fully aware of, I deem it an act of Christian charity, let alone of basic obligation to my fellowmen, to do all in my power, in Casserley's admirable expression, to learn to live with such a high degree of subjectivity that my passion for objectivity is not smothered.

There are, of course, many times in my life when I have nothing else to trust but my subjectivity, but the ground for trusting such subjectivity to take me into action which affects others is the confidence that much that began in me as subjective conviction turned out to be objective, that is, common to me and my fellowmen. There is a world of difference, in the realm of truth, between psychological certitude and epistemological certainty, and the presence of one does not guarantee the other.

As I see it, therefore, the continuing task of any human being who would protect the world against raising his own idiosyncrasies into standards of revelation, is to demand that his private and vital certainties be subjected to the criticism of other human beings and the vital certainties in their lives. In the moment of philosophizing, when the purpose is to subject my psychological certainties to reflective consideration of all the available data, my conviction must be seen as conviction which may be wrong. If I start as a particular type of Christian I must be willing

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*

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to become another type; and I must be willing to give up my Christian belief altogether if it is not coherent with all the facts.

These general remarks about the ground of belief, however, must not hide the more objective epistemological sources of difficulty. The difference between Professor Casserley and myself, I think, stems from the conclusion he draws from his analysis of religious experience as he believes the Bible presents it. As he sees it: "For the Christian, the Bible is a mirror of both personality and history, and it is to history and self-conscious personal existence, as he discovers them revealed with unparalleled clarity in biblical religion, that he turns for the analogies most requisite and necessary to his metaphysical needs, with the maximum of expectation and the minimum of disappointment."<sup>5</sup> The issue, however, lies not in the fact that a Christian metaphysician uses analogies from the Bible, but how he knows that we have here an unparalleled mirror or revelation of both personality and history. Again, I myself find the Bible and Christian experience a rich source of suggestion and analogy, let alone of experience that appeals strongly to me psychologically as a person with a certain type of emotional and moral temperament. But my more fundamental loyalty, not simply as a philosopher but as a person among persons, must be to the search for that fullness of experience which includes coherent interpretation. I must not allow myself, as a person, to be bound even by the riches of biblical experience. Why? Because the very process of knowing what the Bible means, and what its truth consists in, forces me to relate it to other types and versions of experience.

We are thus led to the basic theoretical point of difference between us. It is Casserley's contention that metaphysics and philosophy in general cannot do justice to the logic of the Singular. Since the God encountered in biblical experience is the one being of his kind, the highest of all beings, it is impossible to define God and religious reality in the discursive terms and universals of ordinary language and philosophy. What we are forced to do is to use paradox to express what we know. The "singular demands singular expression, and only paradox can achieve genuine singularity of expression."<sup>6</sup> The traditional ways of conceiving of God, by negation and analogy, themselves involve paradox, so that the paradoxical way of knowing is fundamental.

One might well agree with all this. But the questions I have been forced to ask myself are as follows: Can one express a truth in paradoxical form, let alone interpret the paradoxical, unless he sees it in a non-paradoxical way? Can the paradox have more than individual value unless it succeeds in communicating to others who have had an experience similar to that to which the paradox applies? Without doubt, in experiencing we always experience the unique, the unrepeated, the different in some sense; and I would agree also that we can move only by negation and by analogy when dealing with concrete experience. But, as we perform

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., page 225, and see pages 252, 253, 260, and 182.

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the paradoxical act of trying to express what is not an expression but an experience, what is our real problem epistemologically? Is it not that of knowing which paradox, which negation, which analogy, is more acceptable in the light of the variety of experience? I see no way of choosing the proper paradox unless I find first which interpretation, which paradox, is first more coherent within the realm of Christian experience. There then follows the task of considering whether this paradox does justice to the remainder of experience, religious and non-religious, coherently understood. As a metaphysician I do not object or protest paradox simply because it is paradox, but I criticize any one in the light of all other plausible aids to knowing. Of course, I must realize that if there be a highest reality none of the relations and terms which I draw from other restricted realms will do. But this will not disturb one who like myself seeks to test beliefs by the criterion of *growing, empirical coherence* rather than dictate the structure of reality. It is when paradox, or one paradox, is held up as beyond reasonable criticism, or as true regardless of the reflections it throws on the rest of experience that my total person protests.

Finally, it may be, as Casserley says, that "the truth about all history is not equally revealed in all history."<sup>7</sup> But the Christian who is also a philosopher, that is, a human being who is trying to enlarge his insights by as much experience as possible, must be willing to subject this claim to the evidence. His philosophy is correct not because it is Christian but it is his Christian philosophy because it is the best interpretation of experience he can find. A Christian philosopher may indeed take the "person-historical" level of human experience "for his metaphysical departure," just as a philosopher of physical science may take the impersonal, mathematical sensory realm as a point of departure. But neither, as a philosopher, must protect insights in this realm from exposure to the deliverances of every other realm of experience. Pre-philosophically a person can be anything he finds himself being. Post-philosophically he must learn to discipline himself to the new light gathered in his exploration of the whole of experience.

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., page 182.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., page 235.

# The Incarnate Word and the Language of Culture

WILLIAM H. POTEAT

## *Introduction*



HE "PROBLEM" of the relation of Christianity to culture is not, I think you will agree, a distinct set of issues occupying a separate cubby-hole within Christian apologetics. It is a more general way of positing the same sort of question as has engaged our attention in this Seminar under such other more specific headings as "The Logic of the Singular," "Philosophical and Christian Ethics," "Christian Faith and Metaphysics" and so on. As the problem is more generic, so it is more difficult to say something about it which avoids both empty generality and a falsifying specificity.

You will notice that the presupposition of the above set of topics — "Philosophical and Christian Ethics," "Christian Faith and Metaphysics" — has been the existence of two conflicting or at any rate differing sets of categories which it has seemed important to have related to one another because, we may assume, we are in some way committed to *both* of them or at least recognize the claims of both. A clarification of these claims is desirable not merely in the interests of mental health; but in the interests of truth as well. To ask with Tertullian: "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" may be the short way with both the question and the answer. But it nevertheless both recognizes the existence of Athens and Jerusalem and declares their non-identity. To do this much is to have created for all time a problem: How are Christian categories of various sorts properly related to other categories of a parallel sort?

Secondly, you have noticed that the enterprise of asking and answering this kind of question not only entails someone who is perplexed by the conflicting claims of alternative ways of apprehending the world, but also entails that the conflict be recognized as a conflict, that the competing claims be articulated, and that the desire for a resolution of the conflict be formally expressed by the statement of alternative possible solutions and a prior definition of what a satisfactory resolution would be like, if obtained. Now, patently, one has these conditions fulfilled only when there is a philosopher about the place with a new set of categories, identical with neither set now in conflict, in terms of which a resolution is to be judged a success or failure. Or—to put it differently—if holding or using a set of categories is a first-order activity; and being aware of two different sets of categories to the use of both of which one is partially committed is a second-order activity; then proposing a resolution of their conflict and defining what sort of situation would constitute that resolution is a third-order activity. And, accordingly, there must be second-order and third-order categories operating before these activities can proceed. I will call the third-order activity category-analysis although in principle any

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instance of it systematically places one set of categories beyond analysis. In short, you have *problems* like "Revelation and Reason," "Christianity and Culture," etc. only when a certain philosophical—I mean critical—disposition is abroad. It may be incipient or full-grown. The critical spirit may be naive and blundering or sophisticated and subtle. But if it is not present at all, this kind of problem will not arise. It may be true that whenever a closed society is broken open by the working in it of alien presuppositions, the critical spirit finds a fertile seed-bed. In any case, it seems to me certainly true that the critical spirit must be present if this sociological fact is to produce questions, perplexities and problems. You don't have a "problem of culture"—that is, a theory concerning its source, meaning, destiny and value—until you are aware you *have* a culture. You aren't aware that you have a culture until you begin to be vaguely apprehensive over the waning stability in your life which culture has hitherto imparted. You do not begin to experience this instability in life until you've ceased believing what you once believed—which is to say until you've started to believe other things instead, or at the same time. "The Owl of Minerva only begins her flight when it is already dark."

The most fundamental conflict of basic categories in our Western experience, as we all know, was that which occurred when the Gospel was preached to the Hellenized world. By the very nature of the Gospel, which he preached, it was impossible for the Christian to write off the whole world of Hellenic culture as meaningless, for his proclamation was precisely that Jesus Christ, begotten before all worlds, was not a tribal deity or a culture-hero, but was *Lord of all*. At the same time, there were certain facts of life that had to be faced. The Christian was surrounded by a vast amount of human activity, much of it most impressively organized, over which, in any obvious and straight-forward sense, Jesus Christ was manifestly *not* Lord. On the contrary, he was "foolishness." When St. Paul said to the Athenians: "He whom ye ignorantly worship, I declare unto you"—he accepted a challenge that Christianity *had* to accept, if it was to persist in believing that Jesus Christ was truly the Son and that His Father was truly maker of Heaven and earth. Any separation of the Father and the Son would have meant both that Jesus Christ was not related to the whole of human existence and that the one God had not been incarnate *in* that existence.

The "problem of culture," as we understand it, is, then a product of Christianity. If, as a Christian, you occupy a standpoint which is in principle committed to relating itself positively to all other standpoints; if you are *systematically* under the obligation of finding a place in the scheme of things for all other systems of thought, standpoints or categories because you believe that Jesus Christ is Lord of all, then you have philosophical perplexities that others do not have! You cannot, for example, say of any world-view, system of categories, or kind of proposition that it is absolutely meaningless! You cannot dismiss the philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre or Martin Heidegger, Wittgenstein or J. L. Austin as simply wrong! You cannot recoil from the painting of Juan Gris or the

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poetry of E. E. Cummings as being of no account. ( And this gives us an important first clue as to the peculiar "logical" properties of Christian categories of thought in contrast with others.) For, on principle, all these things have meaning; they speak to him who believes that Jesus Christ is Lord of all. Christ is God's, and ye are Christ's and therefore all these things are yours! They are yours both as a gift, and as a perplexity. You have to ask: "What do they mean in the Providence of God?"

It is probably well before we become completely fogged-in by this use of the word 'category' to try to offer some working definition of it. For the purposes presently at hand, I think it sufficient to say that a category is any *a priori* form, as with an isolate "sense-datum" (for those who suppose there are such things, or that it is helpful to pretend there are), or "space," "time," "causality," "atom," "valency-bond," "Social Contract," "*hybris*," "the end of history," "the withering away of the State" and "compulsive neurosis," which serve to give structure to the world, or—what comes to precisely the same thing—organizes and orders various segments of the world. I would want also to include here those basic analogies, key images, root-metaphors, together with the intentionality which inspires their persistent use.

I do not wish to enter the debate over the "source" of these categories. When I call them *a priori*, I mean only to be saying that they are the conditions of the possibility of the kind of experience which is the terminus of the particular activity of knowing, believing, imagining and sensing in which they *do* play a part; and that if the categories were different, the character of what is known, believed, imagined or sensed would be different, even if perhaps similar; and that, if there were no categories whatever, then there would be nothing which could be known, believed, imagined or sensed.

Further, I am aware—indeed, I would remind you—that a category such as "sense-datum" is what it is in the context of a highly complex set of relations with *other* categories, which, taken together, comprise a language, or a language-stratum; and that the temptation to suppose otherwise while one is doing philosophical analysis is very great and certainly to be avoided. It need not be that language-strata are closed systems to one another. On the contrary, it is precisely one of my claims here that they are very much open to each other, that categories from one get used in another and so on. I am simply anxious to remind you that when this happens, the category changes and the language changes. To take a more obvious example: the word 'history' means different things to Herodotus, Augustine, Ranke, Toynbee and Niebuhr—though, as Wittgenstein would say, its meanings in these different categorial relations may have a family-resemblance to one another.

Finally, for my present purposes, I hope it will be sufficient to say that these categories are built-in to the various written and spoken languages which we actually use about a vast number of different sorts of things and therefore

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are, taken together, the bearers of our presuppositions; and that these languages are used in a bewilderingly varied number of ways, overlapping with one another to produce [when we are in our theoretical posture] puzzles which Prof. Gilbert Ryle has called "category-mistakes," but also producing [in our practical activity] an enrichment of our possible experience.

If we wish to consider the relations between the Incarnate word and the Language of culture, there must be a frank facing of a prior question: What is meant by the assertion: "God was in Christ?" What sort of a claim is it? What is the "logic" of such a proposition — if it is a proposition? What is the relation between the language of theological discourse about the Person, the Work and the personal appropriation of the saving activity of Jesus Christ to the languages in which we discourse upon the various human activities and goals which, taken together, are human culture? We cannot hope to get very far towards answering these questions here. But it is well to know what the questions are! And I shall try to suggest some lines of attack without presuming to do more.

It might appear quite possible to take any classic formulation of the doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ and proceed from there. However, I believe we must admit that it is these very formulations and the categories in which they are made which are thrown in question. Whatever one may believe about the final adequacy of Rudolph Bultmann's answer to the problem, no one, I think, can deny that his *The New Testament and Mythology* raises the crucial question for Christian apologetics. It recognizes that everything is in flux; that we can no longer contrast Revelation and Reason, Christianity and Culture, Theology and Philosophy with any confidence because we can no longer be at all sure what we mean by *any* of these categories.

Given this state of flux, the approach of apologetics tends to assume: 1. That one of its major functions is category-analysis: To take a single popular example, that of distinguishing between the I-It relation and the I-Thou relation. 2. That the 'revealed' truth is on logical all-fours with truth having other credentials at least to the extent that it is apprehended in quite human categories, susceptible of logical analysis alongside other categories—even though this need not prejudge the question of *what* is revealed through these. And here arises a most interesting and perplexing reflection, namely: The category 'revelation' is not found, as such, in the Bible! It is a category which is the product of the critical spirit evoked by the collision of biblical and Greek modes of thought, devised to contrast truth of one sort with truth of another. But it is itself the product of philosophic curiosity—albeit one which is directed upon understanding the Bible as the "Word of God" in contrast with the "word of man." To say: "Thus saith the Lord . . ." is one thing we might say, "doing prophecy." To talk about what it means to say this is quite another: "doing philosophical analysis." The category, 'revelation,' is the product of this latter kind of enterprise. 3. Finally, apologetics as it is frequently practiced

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today, assumes that Christianity is a faith among others; that we all have our presuppositions; and that none has a stronger case than any other, since none has a "case" at all—in the sense of absolutely compelling reasons in support of it. This line has no doubt been very productive. It is the working out of the natural tendency of the critical philosophy since Kant—a movement itself unintelligible apart from an appreciation of the impact of biblical categories of thought upon Western philosophy. But it has its defects both as a philosophic analysis and as an apologetic technique. As an analysis it too readily acquiesces to the view that our "faith" has no logical dependence upon our experience—I use the word here in the broad sense of whatever happens to us: a claim that is both difficult to refute and difficult to believe! And it also frequently obscures crucial logical differences among basic beliefs by the use of a generic term like "faith." As an apologetic technique it has the virtue that it paralyzes the enemy. Unfortunately, however, it also paralyzes the user.

Within the context of the general instability or irrelevance of our inherited categories of thought; and of the present popularity of this kind of apologetic, I wish to make some suggestions concerning the relations of the Incarnate word to the Language of Culture. To this end I shall try to be attentive to two major questions: 1. What is the Christian claim? 2. What categories does it introduce into Western thought?

### I

Generation after generation, the Christian makes the bold claim: "God was in Christ . . .," "The Word became flesh," to Jews a stumbling block, to Greeks foolishness, to a vast number of our contemporaries — not excluding ourselves — simply unintelligible! Can any sense be made of this?

I want to make it clear that I am not concerning myself with (1). Psychological causes of peoples' believing this, if they do; or (2). Logical reasons why they ought to believe it. I am, rather, concerned with what sort of thing they might be said to believe when they believe this claim; and what are the logical and categorial relations of what they are believing to the vast number of other quite different sorts of things which they believe. Now — this is not answerable once and for all! Either you mean: What did this man *think* he was believing when he believed the statement: "God was in Christ . . ."? — and you are engaged in some historical research; or you are asking: What does it mean when *I* say, "God was in Christ . . ." — which may involve you in some analysis of your own thought. But neither of these is the answer to the question: What does the expression: "God was in Christ . . ." mean, as such? For it is precisely this question which every age seeks to answer for itself in terms of: (1). its own reading of the Word of God within its own tradition, historical situation and according to the light shed by the Holy Spirit and (2). the categories of its own historical time, e.g., those of,

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say, Freud, Marx, Heidegger, or Carnap. And, paradoxically, what is just said can be said at all only because such categories as 'Word of God' — in relation to and in contrast with the 'words of the Bible'; 'Tradition'—in the special sense used in Christian theological discourse; 'historical situation'—with its built-in Christian interpretation of history; 'Holy Spirit,' and so on, are used; and these categories are either historically undetermined themselves or are relative. If they are the former, then spurious is the vaunted claim of Christianity to rest upon 'events' [and the word 'event' means, even in Christian usage, things that "happen" in myths, things that "happen" in nature, things that "happen" in history] which actually have a *date*, interpreted by faith. If the latter, then as every generation seeks to answer the question for itself, it has, at the same time to define in its own way the very categories in terms of which the questions shall be posed. The difficulty is nicely illustrated in the following passage from a recent article of Professor Tillich: "Religion," he says, "should . . . accept one of the most powerful criticisms of the intellectual, namely that the symbolic material is changing because the relationship to the ultimate is changing . . . And when you ask, 'Is that valid also of the Christ?' then I would say, 'It is not, because the Christ in sacrificing His temporal and spacial (sic!) existence did not bind us to any special forms of symbolism but transcended them and became the spirit on which the Church is based.'" <sup>1</sup> But, of course, we then have to ask: "Did the Christ who sacrificed his spatial and temporal existence, thereby refusing to bind us to any special forms of symbolism, *bind* us to the *symbol* of a Christ who sacrificed his spatial and temporal existence, in order to liberate us from any special forms of symbolism?"

Now, naturally, there will be a certain consternation with this sort of playing with words. We want to say: "Yes, but after all, the confrontation with the living Christ is an experience that is perennial. There must be a common core to all these experiences! Its meaning may be difficult to specify, but all men, of whatever generation, have seen *something* to accept or reject in the claim: 'The word became flesh'." Well, I do not doubt there are confrontations with the living Christ; or that there may be family-resemblances among these instances. But I would also remind you, first, that words like 'confront'—as it is constantly appearing in theological discourse these days—, 'living,' 'Christ,' and 'experience' are categorially-loaded words in the sense both that they have different *contemporary* uses and, certainly different *historical* uses; and, secondly, even if there is something ineffable beyond all the overlappings of languages—something which shows through the cracks, as it were—something which all the talk is "about" which is nevertheless not exhausted by the talk—; even, I say, if there is this something ineffable, is it not impossible to say *what* that common core is.

Let me emphasize that I am not concerned at present with the possible inexpressibility of that which all language is *about*, i.e. the "ground of Being" or the *Ding An Sich*. Nor, I think, am I ignoring the "problematic of truth" as it is set

<sup>1</sup>"Religion and its Intellectual Critics," *Christianity and Crisis*, March 7, 1955.

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forth in the Pre-Socratics, in Plato's *Republic*, in Augustine's *De Trinitate* and elsewhere.

What is important for us is that Christianity seems to be making a quite *positive* claim that there is a *paradigmatic experience* [which, following my own philosophical commitments, means a paradigmatic set of categories—or language]; that however different from other kinds of experience it may be [and we are now familiar with quite an array: aesthetic, moral, religious, scientific, sensuous and so on] it bears a distinct resemblance to these other kinds of experience, and is, indeed, actually and *crucially* related to some of these. If I may borrow a Kantian distinction for non-Kantian purposes for the next few minutes, I might say: the Christian claims that certain very peculiar sorts of "events"<sup>\*</sup> which are events in no sense familiar to us in the realm of necessity [because it seems inappropriate to use spatial and temporal words about them, and because they are not "caused"] occur in the realm of freedom where, for example, I use the personal pronoun, 'I,' "about" myself; but not about myself as an "object," and where I experience profound changes "*in*" myself [which are peculiar in that they have no cause in the familiar sense, and are not processes in the familiar sense] which I call 'redemption' or 'reconciliation,' or 'atonement.' At the same time the Christian seems to be claiming that the realm of freedom and what "happens" *there* is crucially connected with the realm of necessity and what has happened there; that redemption is inextricably related to the Jesus of history; that to be reconciled with God in the "confrontation" with Jesus of Nazareth "causes" us—in a peculiar, if not embarrassing, sense of the word 'cause'—to confess Him as the Christ. This means further that the Christian holds not only that an event in the realm of necessity§ — Jesus of Nazareth—, known to us in a subject-object structure, is the "cause"—in a peculiar sense—of an "event" in the realm of freedom—which, if it stands before us within a subject-object structure at all, does so only in an extremely odd way; but that there is a third kind of "event," namely, the *Christ*, who is neither just the Jesus of history, nor yet just the "effects" in my life "wrought" in the realm of freedom, but a *new reality* who is known neither as an object in the familiar sense, nor as an "object" in the *unfamiliar* sense, i.e. in the way I am aware of my own I. He is neither an object to me as is the historical Jesus; nor is he just the same kind of thing as my experience of my own subjectivity. For He is a *reality* of whom it can be said that he is really present in the sacraments. It also means that for the Christian, God is *positively* known "within" what we now call the historical world; or more properly, His paradigmatic activity is encountered in relation to a paradigmatic experience *within* the historical world [in the familiar sense] thus con-

\*The use of double quotes indicates that the word is being used in a slightly odd way; single quotes that the *word* and not its referent is the object of attention.

§ I do not forget that historical language is also quite different categorially from that of natural science. I think it safe however not to introduce the further qualification in the interest of preventing my analogy from becoming unnecessarily complicated.

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stituting a *new* "history"—the history of the Church—where the Christ is known and, in any case, where the symbol 'Christ' is used. And this new history—the history of the Church—comes into being in and through the life—indeed, it is the life—of a living community who *enact* and *re-enact* this paradigmatic unification of events in the realm of necessity and "events" in the realm of freedom, thereby experiencing a reality which is neither "profanely" historical nor "eternal," but is precisely the *new* creation and hence requires a whole new language to express it! And, though we must not suppose that 'faith' means just one thing, I think we can say that when we hear the expression 'historical events as seen through the eyes of faith'—and the like—that an "experience" of the practical unification of the language of profane history and the language of "processes" in the realm of freedom has been had. *This* kind of experience is one of the things for which 'revelation' stands in the *new* language of Christian theological discourse!

Apart from Christianity, God is known only as "not this . . . not that . . ." Augustine says: "There is in the mind no knowledge of God except the knowledge of how it does not know Him."<sup>2</sup> The God who is "known" as not this . . . not that in our experience of alienation and sense of His absence, becomes known as the Christ in our experience of reconciliation and sense of his presence. And the Christ event is this peculiar kind of "event" which can be spoken of neither in the language of ordinary subject-object discourse, nor in the strained language with which we try to speak of the realm of freedom; but—if I may persist in my linguistic analogy—requires a *new* language occasioned by the *practical* unification of these two other levels of discourse. The word 'Christ' refers to just this "experience" of reconciliation in confrontation with the Jesus of history. To know God in Christ is to have this "experience" which is neither identical with ordinary subject-object experience nor yet wholly different from it so as to be quite beyond the subject-object dichotomy! As W. H. Auden has put it memorably:

"Because in Him the Flesh is united to the Word without magical transformation,  
Imagination is redeemed from promiscuous fornication with her own images. . . .  
Because in Him the Word is united to the Flesh without loss of perfection, Reason is  
redeemed from incestuous fixation on her own Logic. . . ."<sup>3</sup>

No doubt the line of my argument which has been trailing along through some fairly dense undergrowth seems suddenly to have disappeared altogether. And it is very probably the obscurity surrounding the ambiguous, if not equivocal use of words like 'experience' and phrases like 'practical unification' that are to be held to account. Therefore, allow me to back-track myself briefly.

W. T. Stace in dealing with some of the same questions as those before us has said of the mystical experience, which for him is quite beyond the subject-object dichotomy, that ". . . in that experience time drops away and is no more seen . . . (it) is eternal, that is to say timeless . . . there are in it no divisions and relations

<sup>2</sup> *De Ordine*, II, 18, 44.

<sup>3</sup> "For the Time Being" *The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden*, Random House, pp. 452-453.

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of 'before' and 'after' . . . From within it is God. For it is not a consciousness of God, a divided consciousness wherein the mystic as subject stands over against Deity as object. It is the immanence of God Himself in the soul."<sup>4</sup>

Now, I have no intention whatever of exploiting Stace's embarrassment at having to call what the mystic has "an experience" while at the same time insisting that it does not have a subject-object structure. [It is relevant to notice here that 'experience' is used both as verb and noun, but that it has a built-in subject-object meaning. When I say : "I am experiencing pleasure," this state of affairs clearly has a subject-object structure. 'Pleasure' is the object of the verb 'to experience.' When I say : "I have an experience of pleasure," 'experience of pleasure' is *here* the object of the verb 'to have'; and 'pleasure' is the object of 'experience', though in the epistemological rather than the grammatical sense. Here we have, if you please, a subject-object structure—'experience of pleasure'—within a subject-object structure—'I have an experience of pleasure.] But there is something important here for us. If it were the case that the mystic "experience" absolutely transcended the subject-object dichotomy ; and if the distinction between the experience and that of which it is an experience were wholly absent ; then : (a). there would be no way in which it could even be alluded to in subject-object language, and (b). we couldn't be aware of the experience of being God or of being identical *with* [a relation-word] Him. Strictly speaking we could not be aware at all. We could have no awareness during the "experience," nor *a fortiori* any recollection of it after the "experience." It would be a mere lapse of consciousness of which we could not in principle have any awareness. The mystic experience then *must* bear *some* analogy to ordinary experience if it is (a) to be an "experience" [and here I'm not at all quibbling over the use of the word] ; and (b) if it is to have some relation, *other than mere resemblance*, to ordinary experience. We may, then, admit that it is an "experience" of a very peculiar sort; but if there is no analogy whatever between it and ordinary experience, then it is not an *experience of any* sort, and it is difficult to say *what* it is, if anything.

Now, this means that when we use expressions such as the 'experience of the numinous,' 'the mystic experience,' 'the immediate awareness of God' we have to exhibit their logical peculiarity. Generally, the Eastern religions do so by focusing upon the *differences* between these and our experiences of tables and chairs and then devising a limiting-concept of what lies beyond the subject-object distinction. It qualifies this kind of awareness, in other words, by describing it as though it were *non-awareness*. The goal of religion for them then becomes in principle the achievement of a "knowledge" which is not a *knowing*. Biblical religions on the other hand are informed by the basic analogy of the I-Thou relation. Accordingly they qualify this odd kind of use of 'experience' by describing it as essentially dia-

\* W. T. Stace, *Time and Eternity*, Princeton University Press, pp. 76, 77. Italics in the original.

logical rather than monological, as like the dialogue which the self has with itself and with others. This analogy was inherited by Christianity as it changed from that of a dialogue between a Thou and a Covenanted Nation to one between a Thou and a faithful remnant and finally between a Thou and a faithful suffering servant and Messiah. The symbol, 'the Christ,' is, you might say, logically possible when a single faithful Messiah has as its correlate the individual who now has a vivid sense of his personal, active I, since salvation comes to and through the historical *person* rather than through and to the nation. The practical experience of personal reconciliation with God in confrontation with the Jesus of History is the experience of the Christ! The fact that the language of ordinary historical discourse about the Jesus of history has been unified in the practical—if you like, existential—experience of the apostles with the quite different language for discourse about profound changes which take place within ourselves—the realm of freedom—is symbolized by the words, 'The Christ'. When I myself *have* this experience in relation to the symbol, I am not dealing with anything symbolic, but directly know the very reality symbolized! If I may put it awkwardly, I am no longer *referring to* a reality; I am *in* that reality.† As it is said: "If any man be in Christ . . ." Yet I am *in* that reality not as a molecule of water is in the ocean, but as a person is *in* a personal relation.

Now: I must develop further the meaning of the expression, 'Practical unification of languages.' Let me emphasize that what follows in no way makes pretensions to dealing with all the issues. I am only suggesting a kind of model or map which would guide a more ambitious analysis. Earlier on, I spoke of different ways in which we use event-words such as 'happen,' 'occurrences,' 'occasion,' 'event' and so on. I also used the Kantian distinction between the realm of necessity where categories like 'cause,' 'time,' and 'space' are appropriately and, I shall say, *literally*, used [albeit I think that what constitutes the literal use of a word is a matter for "decision"] ; and the realm of freedom, where, if they are used at all, and it appears inescapable that they should be, then they are "inappropriately" used [and here I use 'inappropriately' inappropriately]. I suggested that when I say: "X happened in history"—however different historical language may be from natural-scientific language—I was referring to an event which had a cause and of which time-words—such as are presupposed by dating—would be appropriate; and that when I say: "I was reconciled to God"—I am also speaking of an "event", but one which is different from the other: an "event" of which my use of event-words to refer to it is peculiar and, further, one where cause-words and time-words are not appropriate. [I am, of course, taking my stand alongside Kant, for the sake of my analogy, in according the privileged use of cause-words and time-words to their role in *Naturwissenschaft*]. Let me condense all this into a distinction between event in sense-one and event in sense-two.

Now: I went on to say that for the Christian the Jesus of history [*event in*

† This is of course very awkward, since 'in' is no less a relation-word than 'to', and if *all* relations disappear, on my own accounting, then so also must all discourse!

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*sense-one]* and the experience of reconciliation with God [*event in sense-two*] were related, not merely by a *logical resemblance*, but "causally"—in, as I said, a peculiar, if not embarrassing, sense of "causally." Perhaps it would be easier if we said "internally" rather than "causally" related. And I said the unification of the two different languages gave rise to the symbol, 'Christ,' and to a whole new language including the word 'history'—now, however, understood as *heilsgeschichte*—and phrases like 'Holy Spirit,' 'the Body of Christ,' 'the real presence,' etc. Here, on this level, the use of the word 'event' in the expression, 'Christ-event,' would be called *event in sense-three*. The problem with which we are faced is: How is such a unification of languages accomplished? We have had offered us in the last 30 years two solutions: 1. An ideal meta-language which, would unify languages and eliminate unnecessary ones; and, 2. a theoretically infinite hierarchy of languages or language-strata. The chief exponent of the first, Wittgenstein, completely abandoned the project as hopelessly misguided. The second is faced with the fact that an appeal to language-strata leaves unsolved the problem of how the strata are related to each other; and further leaves out of account the manifest fact that the world of naive experience—which is not so innocent as it seems—is not discontinuous but a whole of a sort.

I believe, their dogmatic tone aside, that the "ordinary-language philosophers" are moved by a sound instinct at this point. They seem to sense that a clue to this puzzle is to be found in *practice*—in the actual *using* of language. If we could get them to focus on the *user* of language with the same eagerness as they examine language's *use*, they might help us.

Let me pursue this a step further. Let us suppose that 'Me' is a word which appears in the language in which we customarily speak of the Jesus of history and is therefore correlative to *event in sense-one*; and that 'I' is a word which appears in the language in which we would speak of profound "events" which have occurred "in" ourselves and is therefore correlative to *event in sense-two*.<sup>5</sup> When I speak of this distinction between 'Me-language' — the sort used when I deal with "myself" as an object—and 'I-language' — the sort used to refer to my own subjectivity—, the 'I' in the expression 'When I speak . . .' has a different logic from 'I' in the expression 'I-language'. In the first case, 'I' is *being used in a very concrete way as subject of the verb, 'speak'*. In the second case 'I' refers to the peculiar kind of 'awareness' I have of myself as user of the personal pronoun in the nominative case—in contradistinction to that of which 'Me' is used. Let me then say that 'I' is in one case being used. In the other case *that* it is used and that there is "something" of which it is used is a fact which is being talked about. In other words, language is

<sup>5</sup> For this distinction, as well as for many other of the features of this argument, I am indebted to an extended correspondence and later face to face conversations with Ian Ramsey, Nolloth Professor of Christian Philosophy at Oxford, and Fellow of Oriel College. I would further call attention to an excellent article by Prof. Ramsey, "The Systematic Elusiveness of 'I,'" in *Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 20, July 1955, pp. 193 ff., which bears upon this issue. Finally, since writing this, I have seen the MS. of a lecture given before the Oxford Socratic Club by Prof. Ramsey in which this same sort of analysis is applied to the language of the Creeds.

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being used to talk about the *user* of language and *that language*—has a *user*. 'I' is used both as the subject of the language and as the object of the talk about the *user* of language. Let me call these respectively '*I in sense-three*' and '*I in sense-two*'—whose correlative, you will remember, is '*event in sense-two*'. I would suggest that '*I in sense-three*'—what we frequently call the existential self—is the correlative of the "living Christ." It is this which helps us make sense of St. Paul's words: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

How then do we unify these various strata of language? I think we must say that their connection is not *logical* but *practical*. They have their sole connection in the experience and activity of the *user* of language, who "stands behind" every particular language which he may find it expedient to *use* about the world, even the meta-language which he uses about *other* languages. This user of language is peculiar in that he can never become an *object* of experience—or, as we might wish now to say—never be objectified *in language* because he is the presupposition of all language use, the subject of every instance of discourse, and therefore, systematically eludes languages and meta-languages *ad infinitum*. Or if we wanted to say that he *must* in some sense be an object, he is so in a very odd way. He is only found "behind" the language *just now being used*. Yet language and its *ever* having been used is inconceivable apart from him.

If the unification of languages occurs in *practice* through the *user*, then metalinguistic *theory* ["spectation"] can *never*, as a matter of principle, locate the connection. When these languages are the subject of inquiry from a metalinguistic standpoint, there *is* no connection whatever, for the *user* is now 'behind' the meta-language and the *languages* themselves are not now being used. It is only the meta-language which is *now* being used! The "mind-body problem" is theoretical, not practical. It becomes a problem for theory because *theory* ["spectation"] systematically removes the solution in advance.

Notwithstanding all this, and of course inevitably, as is shown by my own present efforts to talk about the way in which different levels of reality or different languages may be unified, theoretical statements or formulations *have* been given. The classical formulations of the relations of the two natures of Christ, of historical event and response, of nature and grace, and so on, are efforts, within the demands of their historic times and the categories then in use, to characterize the kind of relation existing between two or more levels of discourse. The current debate revolving around Bultmann is another such. What I have been saying here is yet another. If I am, in this present theoretical account, embarrassed by the difficulty of sorting out the levels of discourse that are involved, keeping them related to one another, and at the same time *saying* all this about them, it is because I am doing theology and a kind of linguistic analysis and not encountering Christ in the practical activity (and here I would include the act of praying) of faithful response. Yet, if what I have said above is true, it is *only* here that the unification can occur. And of

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course we now see the most striking motif of biblical religion exhibited: "Be ye not hearers of the Word only, but doers"; "Not every man who sayeth, 'Lord! Lord!' shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven"; "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven." This irreconcilable difference between spectation and action, between the aesthetic and religious attitudes, between imagination and will, between contemplation and enactment, between potentiality and act, between the eternal logos and the Word made flesh stands between every other view of reality and Christianity. I am not saying here that it is only the Christian faith which emphasizes *doing* the will of God once it is known. I am saying that there can be no *knowing* of God and His will apart from enactment. The *knowledge* of God depends upon a doing; the doing is a *knowing*. God is not known by "faith"—as though it were some special "God-knowing" faculty. He is known *in* the act of faithfulness. When the expression, 'the Christ', is used as a symbol, it refers just to this knowledge of God which we have in this "experience." For Christianity believes that God is Act *par excellence*; and is known paradigmatically in the intersection of "event-in-sense-one" and "event-in-sense-two," which gives rise to the "event-in-sense-three" through and within that very act whereby I am myself. The divine is crucially known in *Christ*—that experience which includes the practical unification of components which are susceptible of description in terms of "Jesus of history language" and "reconciliation-redemption language." And Christ is known only in my own existence—in my enactment of myself, since for me to exist is not to be a possibility, but *to act!*

At this point, there is an inclination, no doubt, to suspect that all the sleight-of-language ingenuity of the foregoing adds up to a practical denial of the Incarnation, that the Jesus Christ here set forth is not only patently not the Christ of the Creeds and classical formulations, but that he is not *real* in any sense! I agree that one cannot by-pass this issue. I can only reply that it seems to me quite possible at once to accept this analysis as sound in principle and still to confess the Creeds, with no reservations which would not apply equally to this analysis itself; and to counter-attack with some more sleight-of-language. For instance, if you say: "But *this* Christ is not a 'reality', the Incarnation did not, in your view, 'really' happen, the Word did not 'really' become flesh," I should then have to ask: "What does the word 'real' mean?" and then go on to suggest part of the answer. It may be that, among other things, what we mean when we say, "X is real," is, "X can be cashed in *this* language" [i.e. any language which one has chosen to be *the* language *par excellence*]—and that therefore when we ask: "But is this really real, though?", we are implying that it is not cashable in the language which we hold, at that moment, to be the privileged one. Now, if this is the case, one can always require that the language in question show its certificate of special consideration!

Having said this, I would then conclude by saying: "God *really* was in Christ, Very God of Very God!"

Now I want to say something hopelessly cryptic on what seem to me to be

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some of the implications of this interpretation of the language of Christian discourse and its reliance upon the notion of the "practical unification of languages." To this end I want to take a text from W. H. Auden's Christmas Oratorio, "For the Time Being" and, through an exegesis of it, try to make my point. He says, speaking of the Christ-Child:

" . . . By the existence of this Child, the proper value of all other existences is given, for of every other creature it can be said that it has extrinsic importance but of this Child it is the case that He is in no sense a symbol."<sup>6</sup>

I want to attend especially to the phrase: "He is in no sense a symbol."

I have been saying that the expression 'the Christ' is the symbol of the occurrence of a practical unification of the language in which we speak of the Jesus of History and the language in which we speak of the "inner" experience of being reconciled to God; and that 'Christ-event' — which I designated 'event-in-sense-three' — refers, in the primary sense, to that actual experience of reconciliation with God in *practical relation* to the life, teachings, crucifixion, and death of the Jesus of History, which the Apostles had; and, in a secondary sense, to the same experience which I have whenever I have it. When therefore we say: the "Word Became Flesh," we mean first this, for us, paradigmatic practical unification, which became the *Kerygma* of the Church, which is an "event" in-sense-three, and has a "date" in "history" — albeit in peculiar senses of 'date' and 'history'; and also we mean that actual re-enactment of this paradigmatic event, the incarnating of the "Word" in my existence [that is, the acts whereby I am myself], that "making present" of the living Christ in my own existence which is not a copy of the original, a mere recollection of the paradigm, or a contemplation of the *parousia* of the Apostles, but is the real thing, the *Incarnation itself*, just right here within the very act of existing which is myself! *This Christ* does not point beyond itself as a sign refers; He does not direct our attention to some other reality which is mediated to us by Him; He does not invite our attention to or contemplation of a reality beyond the subject-object dichotomy. He is our present life renewed, in all its existential concreteness. As St. Paul says: "For me to live is Christ . . ." He is in no sense a symbol.

This means that in the central act of Christian faithfulness, the Holy Communion, we approach the paradigmatic unification of event-in-sense-one and event-in-sense-two as a symbol — the bread *refers* to the broken body; the wine *refers* to the shed blood. But in ways better understood by depth-psychology than rationalistic Protestantism, but ultimately not to be understood at all, we remain to be confronted in the very depth of our existence with a reality — the non-symbolic Christ.

Yet it will be asked: What is distinctive about these Christian Symbols and realities? Is it not the case that signs and symbols may have both intrinsic

<sup>6</sup> *The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden*, Random House, pp. 451-2.

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and extrinsic interest for us? And in any case, does not every symbol in its semantic role direct our attention away from itself and towards a reality in which our interest is or may be intrinsic, and which we may then grasp immediately?

Obviously one does not enter into these troubled waters without being thoroughly outfitted with categorial commitments of a most elaborate sort which he would not only like to specify clearly, but to defend as well. However, the need for brevity breeds a certain daring. I would answer first that signs and symbols *in their semantic role* never have for us intrinsic interest — though, it does not follow from this that they may not be regarded apart from their referential function. Secondly, we are directly and immediately aware — in many subtly different senses of 'directly' and 'immediately' — of realities to which our attention has been drawn by signs and symbols functioning in their semantic role. I am even willing to say that there are different kinds and degrees or levels of participation in realities — albeit, I think an analysis, not possible here, would show that the kind of epistemological object is correlative to the kind and degree of participation of the epistemological subject — which is to say that subject and object are categorially correlative. All I need to say here is this sort of thing: I directly participate in the reality of a tree when I experience a tree; there is no word 'tree' referring to sense-data of a certain sort, which have been in constant conjunction with other sense-data and which therefore *refer* to these other sense-data, etc. *ad infinitum*. What I want to admit here, in other words, is that in the same sense in which 'the Christ,' functioning as a symbol, brings us to a non-symbolic reality in which we participate immediately, the sign 'tree' brings us to an analogous reality in which we participate immediately, in that sense of 'immediately' appropriate to its use with reference to trees. But now I want to draw a very difficult, perhaps precarious, distinction in order to call attention to something of greatest importance, if the peculiarities of the Christian claim are to be seen. Let me suggest that you reflect upon the difference between what happens when the word 'tree' is spoken, let us say, in some place where no tree is to be seen, and you have an image before your mind; and what is happening when, either with the curiosity of the artist or that of the botanist, you directly perceive a tree standing before you in all its concrete reality. Clearly, there are all sorts of important features involved in this difference, and it may be that we can alter what is before your minds to fit the varying demands of different epistemological problems, and that to this extent the analogy is not a compelling one. But nevertheless, I ask you to believe that we may say that *a possible* difference between the two situations sketched above is the following: The 'I' which is entertaining an image of the tree, upon hearing the word 'tree', is not very profoundly engaged in *personal activity*. The image is just there and, at most, my act of *imagining* correlative to it is there. And built-in to the image of the tree is the property of "being possible" rather than "being actual." Insofar, you might say, as I am engaged in reflecting upon a possible tree, I am, in some degree correlative to it, a possible self. But, by contrast, when I perceive the *existential*

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tree, the I which perceives it is engaged in considerable *personal activity* of responding to, being involved with, bound-up in the tree before it with its body, its senses, its movements and so on. There is the *real* tree over there; over here is a correlative I engaged in the *activity* of responding to it. There is an "otherness" about the existential tree which makes vivid my own sense of my own *activity* in perceiving it. Of the former situation I want to say that it is more symbolic because it has reference to possible realities and possible acts of responding; of the latter, I suggest that it is less symbolic insofar as reality and activity of response are actual. That situation in which, by virtue of a total action of my total self, I became most vividly sensible of my *personal* I (e.g. in a situation of choice concerning my self in its final meaning as in the question: "To be or not to be . . .") would be the most concrete and actual and hence least symbolic situation possible.

If it is the case, then, that there is an analogy between the way the sign 'tree' brings us to a reality, immediately perceived, and the way the symbol "Christ" brings us to a non-symbolic reality, wherein the distinctiveness of 'the Christ' as a symbol? [and I want to be perfectly clear that I am not at the moment asking about the non-symbolic reality, but rather about any peculiar properties which the symbol may have when it functions semantically within Christian discourse. In short, I am concerned with the semantics and pragmatics of the symbol, 'Christ']

I think we can afford to be satisfied in the present context with this schematic answer. I have been saying that the expression, 'the Christ,' is in its semantic role a product of the practical unification of the language of straightforward history and of personal crisis and decision in the experience of the apostles; that it therefore "refers" to that experience; and that, finally, it appears in the discourse of Christians who see a very special significance in that experience, stand in a special relation to it, and re-enact it in their own lives. When we are enjoined in the Holy Communion to "*Do this in remembrance of me . . .*" the *remembered* Christ ceases to be remembered and becomes really present because of the *doing!* Elsewhere I called these respectively, "event-in-sense-one," "event-in-sense-two," and "event-in-sense-three." Let us suppose then that the expression, 'suffered under Pontius Pilate' is straightforward history—or "event-in-sense-one"—kind of language; that the expression, 'one thing I know, that though I was blind, now I see,' appears in the language of personal crisis and decision—is therefore 'event-in-sense-two' kind of talk; and that the expression, 'He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son has not life,' appears in the discourse of the Community of Christians where a new "history" has come to be.

Now what I want you to notice here is this: *First* the symbol, 'the Christ' is used in a community as both the focus of its historical memory and as the center of its paradigmatic act — the act by which it *is* itself. As St. Augustine says of the Holy Communion: "Receive therefore and eat the Body of Christ, you who are already made members of Christ within the Body of Christ. Take and drink the Blood of Christ. Lest you should fall apart, drink that which

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binds you together." Therefore it is a device *par excellence* for recollection and enactment [and here we are concerned primarily with the pragmatics of the term]. Secondly, the symbol is itself the product of a fusion of two other languages: that of actions [history in the familiar sense]; that of decisions [history in the less familiar sense]. The Christ points to *action*, *decision* and *enactment*. The symbol systematically points away from itself towards the most concrete, most non-symbolic, of all realities, an action of the total self, where there is no separation between means and ends, knowledge and will, subject and object [in the conventional epistemological or monological sense], intention and thing intended, possibility and actuality. But the surpassing or overcoming of all these dichotomies is one which, far from obliterating the personal I in some impersonal being or non-being, heightens the sense of personal activity and reality. 'The Christ' as a symbol is the correlative of the pronoun, 'I' — when used to refer to that being "of which," as Hume said, "we have an intimate memory and consciousness," which stands behind all language, yet which, as *active*, systematically eludes all language. Christ, the reality, is the correlative of the existing, acting self. Therefore, when we experience the reality of the living Christ, it is a matter of indifference whether we say, "I live," or "Christ lives in me." In place of the conventional subject-object dichotomy, we now have *I-Thou*!

The Christian claim is that here, in Christ, we encounter God paradigmatically. The nature of the symbol, 'the Christ', is such that it brings us to the most concrete reality there is, that is, ourselves as actively in relation to God. As Augustine says: "He is nearer to us than we are to ourselves, even when we are far from Him." It is Jesus Christ who brings us to ourselves.

You may feel at the end of all this that what I have said has only a remote bearing upon the general problem of "Christianity and Culture" — as it is usually discussed —, and with this I am of course forced to agree. Perhaps the best that can be said for this paper is that it seeks to provide a prolegomenon to certain aspects of the larger questions. I have already said that other ages approached the problem differently and formulated their answers differently. From this it follows that my analysis in no sense pretends to describe what men in other times using different categories were *in fact* doing while supposing they were doing something else. What I have tried chiefly to do is state the problem of Christianity and the problem of culture at what I take to be their deepest levels — the level of categories and language. And, after the fashion of the time, I have sought to describe their relation to each other in terms of that between Christian theological discourse and other forms of discourse about other things. The surface has only been scratched.

There are at least two major questions which belong to this inquiry, which time forces me to omit: *First*, How 'the Christ' is both a *yes* and a *no* to culture. What do we mean when we say this? How is this dialectical relation to culture built-in to the symbol itself? *Second*, What further categories and

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symbols does the symbol 'Christ' provide us with so that light is shed upon the logical (faith and reason), psychological and sociological properties and relations of other categories actually in use; and upon the plight of man in human culture — alternating between a despairing relativism and a presumptuous absolutism. But that is for someone else to do.

One final word. Earlier on I said that a category is what it is in the context of a highly complex set of relations with *other* categories, which taken together, comprise a language.

So it is with 'the Christ'. In trying to specify *what* it is as a *symbol*, I was forced to employ a whole net-work of categories; and I was also forced to show some of the various relations in which these stand when used for this purpose. The symbol, 'Christ,' can equally well stand for a network of other symbols, together with the categories by which *their* meaning is to be specified. When understood in *this* way, it is possible for us to say that the *Incarnate Word* introduces into language as it is used — and thereby into thought and thus into action and hence finally into culture, which is itself a practical unification of languages — a new set of categories which transforms its very fabric. Words, like 'nature,' 'to be,' 'know,' 'faith,' 'freedom,' 'tragedy'—to name but a few—can never be used again in quite the same way.

It is as Auden has said:

"Because in Him the flesh is united to the Word without magical transformation, Imagination is redeemed from promiscuous fornication with her own images. . . . Nor is there any situation which is essentially more or less interesting than another. . . . Because in Him all passions find a logical In-Order-that, by Him is the perpetual recurrence of Art assured. . . . Because in Him the Word is united to the Flesh without loss of perfection, Reason is redeemed from incestuous fixation on her own logic . . . the possibilities of real knowledge are as many as are the creatures in the very real and most exciting universe that God creates with and for his love. . . . Because in Him abstraction finds a passionate For-the-Sake-of, by Him is the continuous development of Science assured"<sup>7</sup>

The Christ relates all of the human activities, which taken together, comprise culture, to the most concrete of all realities, indeed, the only concrete one, the "existential" self realizing itself in active response to the God, who though he made heaven and earth, is yet so near to each of us that anyone so minded may call Him, "Father". In so doing, He affirms its every gesture, the-while redeeming it all from "incestuous fixation" upon itself.

<sup>7</sup> Op. Cit., pp. 452, 453, 454.

## The Idea of God --- Literal or Analogical?

CHARLES HARTSHORNE

N RELIGION, "God" is the name for the One who is worshipped. We can see what this means—and here I follow, in my own way, a suggestion of Paul Tillich—by considering what Jesus called the "First and great commandment," "Thou shall love him . . . with all thy heart and mind and soul and strength." God is the one who is to be loved unreservedly and completely, he is the proper all-inclusive object of interest and devotion. He therefore must embrace all that is worthy of our interest, and this means, all that is; for it is impossible to recognize anything as wholly uninteresting—the recognition being already an interest. Accordingly, the divine is not simply another, even a supreme, reality, in addition to ordinary realities; he is all-reality as somehow one. Not only can there be no "gods" beside God, there can be nothing beside, outside, or merely additional to him. For if there were, an additional interest would also be in order—and thus all devotion would not be given to God. God is also to be thought of as conscious and loving, for there can be no whole-hearted devotion to the unconscious or loveless. Such is God for religion.

For philosophy, God is the solution to certain fundamental problems, the answer to certain theoretical questions. He is the object of integral understanding, rather than of integral devotion. The proofs for the divine existence express this theoretical interest. Thus God is the ground of order, the coordinating factor in existence; or the Cause back of all causes; he is also, though this is often overlooked or denied, the effect that embraces all effects, the way in which the world process, at each moment, adds up to something unitary and significant, an integral totality. For just as integral devotion implies a reality inclusive of all objects of interest, whether causes or effects, so integral understanding, as sought by philosophy, is concerned with the question, what kind of totality does existence, both caused and uncaused, constitute? God may, among other things, be the First Cause, but the mere First Cause is not God; for he is also the latest, or most complete, effect, the consummation as well as the origin of process. This follows, for instance, from the philosophical conception of the divine knowledge as summing up all truth. For truth concerns things that are caused as well as what causes them. And the knowledge of *X* includes *X*—literally so, and not merely "intensionally," if the knowledge is absolutely adequate.

But the human mind tends, almost irresistibly, to oversimplify. It is simpler to think of God, in relation to the world, as First Cause, no more and no less. Arguments are often given for this simplification. Must not the source of all perfections be absolutely perfect, and how can the coming into being of effects contribute anything to what is already perfect just in itself? This argument, almost as old as philosophy, appears to rest upon ambiguities. Suppose a man first misunderstands and then comes to understand his friend; this *improvement* in the

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man's understanding is certainly the removal of a previous defect, such as one would not attribute to God. But if a man at first does not enjoy the privilege of loving his third child, because, in fact, there is no third child of his in existence, and then such a child is born to him and he loves the child, is this the removal of a previous defect? On such a principle, the only way to avoid defects would be to have, as actualized, all possible realities. But some possibilities contradict others. All possible things—for instance, all possible children—would be sheer chaos. The phrase is downright nonsense. Is the word "defect" properly applied to the failure to realize this absurdity? Moreover to say, the child that *might* be born *would*, if it *were* born, enrich not only the human parent but also deity, is not to say that there is an object of our interest outside of or additional to God, for there *is no such child*, except as a possibility, and as a possibility, the child is in God, for it represents his creative capacity, and his capacity to include a potential reality should it become actual. Thus integral devotion is not contradicted by admitting that God includes effects as such. It would be contradicted by denying this. For then our interest in effects would not be an interest in God.

The view that God includes all things will by some be termed "Pantheism." If this term only means the doctrine that all things are literally in God, then, as we have seen, this follows from the religious meaning of the term "God." But *historically*, the word "Pantheism" has generally been used to mean something more restricted than the mere inclusion of everything in the divine. It has meant a *special way* of conceiving this inclusion. Since this way involves hopeless difficulties (one has only to recall Spinoza), it has seemed to many that we must altogether deny any literal inclusiveness of deity. Rather, it is said, all things are in God only in the sense that all things are *from* or *by* him, having him as their cause. And, it is urged, the cause must contain at least the equivalent of the effect, something as good or better. The religious objection to this is that we are not asked simply to love something as good as, or better than, our neighbor, or causative of our neighbor, we are asked to love our neighbor: not the divine cause simply but the effect, the creature. Yet, our whole heart is to be given to God. It seems clearly to follow that God must somehow really *be* effect as well as cause, creation as well as creator. Thus one may speak, with several authors, of divine self-creation, achieved in and through world-creation. It must, of course, be understood that this does not mean: at first, God did not exist, and then he came to exist; it means only that he exists in a new and enriched state with each phase of creation. In his essential character, or basic principle of action, he is eternally the same, and has never come into being; but in his total concrete actuality he is temporal, in so far as he receives new content, enrichment but never loss, from the world. This doctrine, which some have called *Panentheism*, is a middle ground between pantheism and mere theism. For it grants to theism something in God wholly independent of the world, namely, the essential principle of divine character; and it grants to pantheism something in God not independent of the world, namely, the concrete, detailed content of the divine experience.

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It is to be noted that God as the object of integral devotion today differs from God as the object yesterday, since today we love neighbors some of whom did not exist, at least in the same state, yesterday. Indeed today's neighbors might never have existed as they do exist. For they consist partly of their free, contingent acts. God thus, as total object of devotion, must not be conceived as altogether immutable and immune to contingent alternatives. Is this result really so troublesome as some feel it to be? If a man can keep the same basic character and principles of conduct through years of changing experiences, if self-identity through a period of time is thus possible in our case, why may it not be possible in the supreme or divine case through all eternity? Sameness of personality is a matter of principle, not of details of experience and action. These can be partly new, from moment to moment, without there being any unsteadiness or unreliability of character. It is the *character* of God, is it not? in which there must be "no shadow of turning."

Let us consider now the divine knowledge, or what is called omniscience. The traditional view, held by most theologians, was that this meant seeing all events, regardless of date, in a single eternal consciousness. But is this required, in order for God to know all things? For in what sense are future events "things"? Are there any future events? Did you ever observe one? There are indeed future events on the calendar, and there are kinds of events which can be located somewhere in the future, such as your or my ultimate death. But the concrete happenings which may correspond to these dates, or which may constitute the actual manner of our dying, these are not on the calendar, nor are they included in our grasp of the fact that we all must somehow die. Perhaps the details of these things are as yet unsettled, indeterminate, since they depend partly upon decisions of various persons, decisions not yet made. "What will be will be," we sometimes say; yes, but perhaps the future consists less of "will-bes" than of "may-bes!" And if the future is not wholly settled or definite now, still less, one would think, can it have been settled from all eternity. Therefore God, who knows things as they are, the unsettled as unsettled, the indefinite as indefinite, will know definite events only so far as there are such events. The unreserved love for God does imply that he knows us as we are; but can it imply that he knew us from all eternity, if we did not exist to be known from all eternity? Before I existed, what need can there have been that this non-entity should be known? Or what eternal need can there be for knowledge of what does not eternally exist as subject to need? So we may conceive God as knowing events only when and after they have happened; while future events are, for him, as for us, really future, that is, awaiting their full definition and reality. His knowledge of the world will then grow as the world to be known grows. Yet he will never have been ignorant of anything that really existed. He will cognitively possess every actuality from the moment of its actualization.

One of the best expounders of this doctrine was the nineteenth-century German psychologist and philosopher, Fechner. According to him, there is real novelty,

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even for God. To take his analogy: many things are new to the child that are an old story to the parent; but the child's enjoyment of novelty is itself really new, even for the parent, since *that individual enjoyment* of novelty never existed before, for any parent to share in by sympathetic observation. Substitute the heavenly parent and, as Fechner beautifully suggests, the conclusion still holds. Indeed, only the heavenly parent can fully savor all the unique additions to reality which are his children's experiences. Does this enrichment of God through his children imply previous defect? No, said Fechner, for though God surpasses himself from moment to moment, no one but God can possibly surpass or equal *him*, for he possesses all the value that anyone does, and incomparably more besides. God's surpassing of himself is his affair; it does not by one iota alter his worshipful superiority to all other beings, whether past and actual, or future and possible. Fechner held that the only perfection that has meaning is a perfect and eternal principle of advance, with and through the world, into new values.

Fechner had another great idea, in which he used his insight as a psychologist. We speak of God as a will, a being acting voluntarily. Now what is will? It is a directing of impulses. The will is "the highest ruler of the Soul," not the entire soul, or if you prefer, not the entire conscious life. What then in God is analogous to impulses in us? For if nothing is analogous, then neither can anything be analogous to will, and the term means nothing in application to God. The solution is a bold stroke: our own wills, the wills of all creatures, are literally in God, but not as what corresponds in him to will, rather as what corresponds to impulse. Divine volition is direction of this involuntary factor in the divine soul. It is not a mere play of the heavenly will with itself. What is, so far as God is concerned, involuntary, may yet, in itself, be voluntary, that is, it may be *our* volition. Herewith the problem of evil is at least partly solved. Our volitions (and for Fechner's panpsychism this applies to all creatures, not simply to human beings) our volitions are really ours, though they are in God as his impulses; they can be directed, encouraged, given limits by him, but they cannot, by the very meaning of impulse, be simply manufactured according to the divine will's ideals or purposes. Thus in spite of the evil in the world, God can be thought of *both* as ideally good *and* as ideally powerful, provided we realize that power, by its very nature, and even in the ideal case, is a partial, rather than a complete, determining of the wills of others.

What, in the foregoing account, is literal, and what is metaphorical, or at least, analogical? The psychological conceptions, such as love, will, knowledge, are non-literal. For God's love or knowledge differ *in principle*, not merely in degree, from ours. The criterion of these non-literal concepts is precisely that they involve degrees, that they are affairs of more or less, of high and low. They are *qualitative*. Literal concepts are not matters of degree, but of all or none. They express the formal status of an entity, they classify propositions about it as of a certain logical type.

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1) In "God exists necessarily" the "necessarily" is meant literally. There is no ordinary, inferior case of existential necessity, but only the divine case. "Necessary" means, common to all possibilities, or without possible alternative. There is nothing metaphorical here.

2) A second example is this: "God has contingent predicates." (Propositions are true of him that might have been false.) The contingency here is literal. Simply, God might not have had the predicates. Thus the predicate, knowing that you and I exist, he might not have had. For we might not have existed to be known.

3) All true propositions, such as P, are also true of God in the equivalent form, "God knows that P." Here "knows" is only analogical, but "all true propositions can be translated into truths about God" is literally true, and there is no other entity that in this, or any other manner is bound to contain all truth. This is one way to state the all-inclusiveness of God formally, *i.e.* literally: God is coincident with all truth and reality. He is Being Itself; but also Becoming Itself. He is Actuality Itself, and also Potentiality Itself. What is actual is what he actually has in his reality; what is possible is what he could have in his reality. He is on both sides of every contrast. He is not neutral to all alternatives, but sensitive to all. They are divine alternatives. To wish something is to wish that God might be or have something; to regret something is to regret that God is or has it. All functions are God-functions. This is the real absoluteness or infinity of God, that nothing is simply outside of him. But it follows that *all* finitude qualifies him, rather than that no finitude qualifies him. He is finite in all the ways anything is, so far as finitude means definite arbitrary qualification, according to the Law of Excluded Middle, e. g., if I might have been a poet, but have not been, then God might have been, but is not, the God of that poet. God is dependent on all things as literally as he is independent of all: the dependence is, every difference makes a divine difference; the independence is, *no* difference makes an *existential* divine difference. Everything causes God to be this, rather than that; but nothing causes him to exist rather than not to exist. Both these statements are literal. "God is on both sides of every alternative" may be taken as the truth, badly obscured in part, of Hindu monism, or doctrine of non-duality. "God and the sinner" is really, "God possessing the sinner," and if the sinner might have been a saint, then God might have been the God of that saint. Tragedy is within God, not outside him. This is the great common message of Schelling, Berdyaev, and Whitehead—also of A. E. Garvie, the English Congregationalist, and Josiah Royce. Royce, however, spoiled it by wholly eternalizing the divine life, and by making God actually *will* the evil. Fechner is the better guide here. But anyhow, the tragedy is not outside the divine life. The divine love takes all suffering upon itself. To say, "God suffers" is to speak analogically; to say, God has all suffering as intrinsic to his own reality, is to speak literally. For all-inclusiveness, non-duality, is a formal character of deity. There is no such situation as God *and* something else, except as one may speak of a man and his experiences, or a man and his body. There is

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nothing additional to the divine reality. All truth is descriptive of deity, and the full description of deity would exhaust truth. It must do so, for interest in God is all interest. He is the inclusive object of valuation. In this, religion and metaphysics should, I think, agree.

Although nothing is additional to God, everything contingent is additional to God considered only in his "essence," meaning by that, what is common to God in all alternative possible states—or that by which God is himself, or again, that which is referred to in saying that "He" exists necessarily. His essence is his very individuality, by which "He" is identified. Contingent predicates, by definition, are non-identifying. God would be God without them. But unless there were an essential character which identified the subject of "God exists necessarily," the proposition would only say, "necessarily, something or other exists." This is not enough. It is the essence of God which necessarily exists. To this essence, nothing contingent or created can be intrinsic. But to God as He actually is—and this actuality is more than bare existence—nothing is extrinsic.

Concerning the "analogy of faith," in which we compare the creatures to God, not God to creatures, there is an old argument: we know our defects only in so far as we know the divine standard; we do not first know our defects independently, and then, by denying these, conceive God. Who knows what human knowledge is, or human love? Think of the variety of theories! Self-knowledge and knowledge of God are apparently inseparable. Neither is clear unless both are somehow clear. But only the essence, and certain limited aspects of the contingent properties of God are necessary for this purpose. It appears that mystic insight is a matter of degree, and cannot be wholly absent.

## Ecumenicity and the Scandal of Philosophy

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T PRESENT, WITHIN PROTESTANTISM, the ecumenical movement seems at best to be but a hope. If the term "ecumenical" is given a broader meaning, to include the possible union of all Christians, Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic, then there is to be found little movement, and even less, if any, hope. In so far as the ecumenical movement exists at all, it is because of the scandal within Christianity itself. What we wish to assert and defend is the thesis that the union of Protestant Christians will remain a hope, and a not very pious one, until another scandal is overcome—that of philosophy. It is to be observed that this is a prerequisite for the union not only of Protestant Christians, but for any and all Christian groups.

What is this scandal of philosophy? For the twentieth century it is this, that we are reaping academically as well as in public affairs, the consequences of the anti-intellectualism and philosophical nihilism sown some centuries earlier. This would be serious enough if confined to non-Christian areas, but it is a tragedy when it becomes almost intrinsic to Protestant Christianity itself.

First, some points of clarification. A minimal meaning of the term "philosophy" will include "metaphysics," the very heart of philosophy. According to context, the term may include other subjects dependent, wholly or in part, upon metaphysics. By "content of faith" reference is made to truths of revelation. Either there is such truth, or there is not. If not, then there is no problem of ecumenicity.

Concerned as we shall be with the corruption of reason, at the very beginning we may avoid the error of extreme rationalism by recognizing that philosophy, though necessary, is not sufficient for Christian doctrine. Reason may allow the possibility of, and be necessary to the complete understanding of, revelation. But it cannot supply the content of, or be a substitute for, any revelation which constitutes the unique subject matter of theology as a knowledge-claim.

*The scandal of philosophy.* We have spoken of "the scandal of philosophy." For teachers of philosophy the consequences are serious. In most non-Roman Catholic colleges and universities, which have more and more approached the nature of technological institutes with "liberal" trimmings, the philosopher today is useless. There are many reasons, historical and social, for this fact, but they all converge on one proposition to the effect that too many people no longer believe that there is philosophical knowledge. I take this as brute fact, and shall not waste time in amassing the evidence. The philosopher's mail man may consider it debatable, but not the philosopher's colleagues. So far from being debatable, many would insist upon the "truth" that there is no philosophical truth.

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This fact may not be a pleasant one, but to any objector may be asked: What common philosophical knowledge do philosophers possess? Of course, they may happen to have common agreements on philosophical issues. But do they have these because they claim to have knowledge, or because they don't. Let us sharpen the matter.

There is a body of knowledge called "physics." Whatever disagreements physicists may have, they are intelligible against the background of this knowledge. There are agreements among physicists because there is a body of physical knowledge. There is not a body of physical knowledge because there is agreement among physicists. This is true because knowledge is possessed only by individual persons, although the social context may often provide the necessary means by which persons acquire knowledge. The denial of all of this is to equate knowledge with "consensus." Since it is possible to have consensus without knowledge, the assertion of equivalence is merely an elliptical way of denying the possibility of a body of knowledge.

Now if we turn to disagreements among philosophers on, say, metaphysics, to what do we turn in order to solve the problems or to render them intelligible? One may be tempted to say that there is nothing. But there are really two alternatives. There may appear to be nothing because there is nothing. Or, there may be a body of philosophical knowledge, even though many will not recognize it as such. For the present let us delay giving an answer in order to deal with a prior question. For a philosophical body of knowledge to be such, what criteria must be satisfied? What are the signs in terms of which one can recognize a body of philosophical knowledge to be what it pretends to be? When this is answered, then we may ask whether there is anything that goes under the name of philosophy which satisfies these criteria.

Since all philosophical disciplines depend wholly or in part upon metaphysics, in order to be specific and avoid the confusion of using a general term referring to the several disciplines, let us confine our analysis to metaphysics.

*The problem of metaphysical criteria.* It may be said that for metaphysics to be a body of knowledge it must be adequate, systematic, and not only be true but be able to account for the concept of truth. These are necessary criteria, but are they sufficient? Is it not possible for two contradictory metaphysics each to appeal to these criteria and to claim to have satisfied them? Furthermore, is it not the case that metaphysics is unique in that the criteria in terms of which it is to be judged are, and must be, metaphysically determined? For example, if two metaphysical systems each criticize the other for not being systematic, and at the same time there is a difference on the meaning of "systematic" because the one system differs from the other, say, in admitting the logical principle of non-contradiction as relevant to the meaning of "system," then how can "systematic" be used as a criterion for choosing the one and rejecting the other.

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Nor is it sufficient to know that for a metaphysical system to be true, and hence knowledge, that it must account for the concept of truth itself. For here, again, the metaphysics which is to be judged determines its own criterion. To illustrate. How can one use the notion of "accounting for the concept of truth" to judge between an Aristotelian realism and an Hegelian idealism when neither will allow the notion of truth as defined by the other?

One might be tempted to say that it comes down to this, that either one sees a metaphysics to be true or one does not. Again, this is to be granted, but it is hardly relevant to the problem. What we are looking for are some criteria in terms of which we may be aided in "seeing" that what claims to be knowledge is really so.

Let us admit that these criteria are necessary for any one living today, and that for a person living two thousand or twenty-five hundred years ago they had to be sufficient. The distinction we make is not merely a temporal one. Rather we are calling attention to the fact that there is such a thing as the history of philosophy. Whatever metaphysical truth and error may be, surely we can find it in the wisdom of the past, even though it may not be there completely. The plausibility of this may better be understood if we contemplate the implications of its denial. If metaphysical truth cannot be found in the past, then it is because either metaphysics as knowledge is impossible, or although it is possible, metaphysical truth is yet to be discovered. But the two alternatives are really one, namely, skepticism. For it makes little sense to say, in order to escape skepticism, that although after twenty-five hundred years of struggling to obtain metaphysical truth we have completely failed, nevertheless, somehow, in the distant future, we will obtain it. On what grounds could one say such a thing? Would not one have to have metaphysical truth to know all this!

We must face the fact that in the twentieth century we are not in the same position as Thales, Anaxagoras, or even Aristotle, for we have a heritage they did not have. Hence, our philosophic responsibility is greater than theirs; and if we do not measure up to it, then our guilt is greater. Metaphysical skepticism may be either personal honesty or philosophical irresponsibility. Which it is in any given case, only the skeptic and his God can know.

But if skepticism is to be avoided, to what does one turn for metaphysical truth? To the metaphysics of some one philosopher? Whitehead? Hegel? Spinoza? Plato? Certainly not, for this would be practically equivalent to deification of the person. In our century even the truth in any philosopher's metaphysics can not be understood in abstraction from the history of philosophy. And if deification of the individual is to be avoided, then truth must be found in that history, which admission is contradictory to the original assumption that metaphysical truth is to be found in the thought of any one person.

Another alternative is to make up one's own metaphysical system. Since Descartes, and even earlier, this has been very fashionable. But if the former

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alternative is unsatisfactory, this one must be rejected *a fortiori*.

Only one alternative remains, that one accepts a metaphysical system to which the thoughts of various philosophers are instrumental. Such a system would be asserted as essentially true, however incomplete it may be with respect to the whole truth. Now either there is such a system, or there is not. If there is not, then to skepticism we are doomed. On the other hand, if there is, by what marks can we recognize it? We have mentioned some criteria that are necessary, but not sufficient, and which are independent of the history of philosophy. We suggest two others, one independent, and the other dependent, upon the history of philosophy.

*The criterion of autonomy.* Any metaphysical system or tradition for which a knowledge-claim is to be made must be based upon, and developed from, its own categories or concepts. This means that metaphysics is autonomous and rests upon its own evidence. Resting upon its own evidence means that the propositions of no other science enter constitutively into metaphysics. The constitutive relation of one kind of knowledge to another is as follows: If the truth of some specific proposition of type B knowledge requires the assertion of the truth of some specific proposition of type A knowledge, then A is partially *constitutive* of B. An example of this constitutive relation would be the "philosophy of nature," for it is partially constituted by metaphysics, the other factor being experimental science. But metaphysics itself cannot be so constituted. *Metaphysics may be either regulative or constitutive of other kinds of knowledge, but the converse relation is impossible.*

It is to be noted, however, that other kinds of knowledge may be *instrumental to* metaphysics. The instrumental relation is as follows: If the truth of some specific proposition of type B knowledge requires the truth of some (indifferently) propositions of type A knowledge, then A is instrumental to B. For an example, the experimental sciences are instrumental to metaphysics.

All this can be stated less accurately, but more familiarly, in other language. If metaphysics deals with the most general and pervasive concepts, then these can not be identical with the more limited concepts of the special sciences. In saying that metaphysics must be based upon its own concepts, we mean that these pervasive concepts are quite as experiential as others. In another language, we may say that metaphysics is concerned with Being. Our criterion can then be expressed in this way: The science of Being must never be founded merely on *a* being, or *a* mode of being. Any other science can only be instrumental to, never constitutive of, metaphysical truth.

The importance of this criterion of metaphysics as knowledge may better be seen by understanding what it would mean to deny it. The denial means this, that some other kind of knowledge is *real* knowledge, whereas metaphysics is some kind of superstructure erected upon it. Such a superstructure may be, and has been, called "metaphysics." But it can hardly lay claim to be knowledge, to be

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a science. Other names are more accurate, such as a "personal philosophy", a "Weltanschauung," or an "ideology." The constructed superstructures may vary from an eclectic jumble of contradictions to relatively consistent systems. But there is a great deal of difference between metaphysics as a science and metaphysics as some kind of conceptual portrait painting. The difference is that between nature and art, between knowing and making. In the one case, the aim is to allow the forms of things to be imposed upon the mind. In the other, the aim is to impose the conceptual forms of the mind upon things. There is an art in knowing, but knowing is not art.

It is when this criterion of autonomy is not satisfied that a so-called metaphysical system feels the force of the skeptic's arguments. The protest of the skeptic has never been essentially against the act of constructing ideational superstructures. Some believe it is a waste of time. Others would encourage it as satisfying certain needs of the organism. All that the skeptic insists upon is that such constructions can have no truth-value, no knowledge-claim.

*The criterion of continuity.* The second additional criterion which we suggest is necessary as a mark or sign of metaphysical knowledge, at least for modern or contemporary man, is that metaphysics as science must have a history in which continuity is present. The early philosophers did not have this aid in helping them to choose between competing metaphysical truth-claims. But we have a lesson to learn from the history of philosophy. And this lesson is that truth must be found in some system that has had a continuous development. We would even go so far as to say that only such a system can make intelligible even the history of philosophy itself. Otherwise the history of philosophy degenerates in an historicism in which we have merely a biographical record of the mental gyrations of individual philosophers.

Three propositions and two corollaries may clarify the meaning of "continuity."

1) In order that a metaphysical system may have the mark of truth there must be some principles which persist as a unity throughout historical change. This criterion is merely necessary, not sufficient.

2) The change must be in the nature of a "development."

3) The change must not be a "substantial change."

Each of these propositions implies the other two, and hence the three could be put in the form of one complex proposition. Of course, literally the first principles constituting the unity do not change or develop, and in that sense do not have a history. But the system as a whole does. And this in three ways. First, at any given time it may not be clear just what is implied by the first principles which constitute the unity. Some trial and error experimentation is involved. Second, there is a gradual accumulation of new truths which are implicit in the system; or, if not necessarily implied by it, are at least not incompatible with it. Third, there is that kind of development which is the increased depth of under-

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standing that comes with time and the persistent thought of those who are constantly trying to actualize the truth by clarification of what is potential in the system.

These three propositions may better be understood by seeing what is involved in their denial. Without some unity persisting throughout change there could be no system. Without the notion of change and development one would have to maintain that total metaphysical truth is contained in the thought of some one philosopher in the past. The implausibility of this needs no comment. Finally, change cannot be substantial for that would imply the destruction of the unity, the essence of the system, and hence the elimination of all continuity. If such an assertion is to be made of a metaphysical system, it is equivalent to saying that it is essentially false. The system can not have a knowledge-claim.

The two corollaries are as follows.

First, in the development of the metaphysical system the thought of particular philosophers contribute to it, but the system can not be wholly identified with any given person. If, for some purpose, this is done, then it serves only to indicate the relative importance of the thought of that person to the system. Second, even though the work of a philosopher may be rejected in part, he may be said to belong to the metaphysical tradition, if that which is essential in his work does not involve a substantial change in the metaphysical system.

*Skepticism and responsible teaching.* Now, let us briefly review what has been said about the criteria in terms of which we look for a metaphysical system that has a knowledge-claim. Of course, subjectively, we either see the truth of a system, or we do not. In that sense, as Spinoza has pointed out, truth is its own criterion, and it could not be otherwise. But what we have been concerned with are those criteria by which a contemporary may overcome his skepticism, and in terms of which he may separate a real from an apparent metaphysical knowledge-claim. These criteria are aids enabling the seeker to get inside of, and work within, the system. Once having done that, the problem remaining is that of seeing the truth of the system and appropriating it for oneself.

We found that the criteria of "adequacy" and "system," while necessary, were not of much help, for the former was somewhat question-begging, and the latter is a criterion more of the possibility, than of the actuality, of the truth of a metaphysics. More important were the criteria of autonomy and continuity. If metaphysics is to be a kind of knowledge, a science, then neither "making" nor "doing" can be substituted for cognition.

By the principle of non-contradiction alone we know that we shall find only one *system* satisfying these criteria. But once having it, philosophers would then have an authoritative body of knowledge to appeal to, just as has the practitioner of any other science. Teachers of philosophy would once again, at least in many

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universities, recapture the legitimate authority that has long been lost. The autonomy of metaphysics would demand for philosophy an important place in a college or university curriculum. It could no longer — even as a concession to the past and because of a "cultural lag" — be tolerated on the periphery of the curriculum. Nor could it be totally dismissed by throwing into that miscellaneous waste basket called "the humanities," which may include most anything from Arabic to the Romantic Novel.

At this point attention should be called to the fact that if all this is true there would be no limitation on any one's moral freedom. There are only two alternatives if one rejects the metaphysical system. One can reject it because he believes metaphysics as knowledge is impossible, or he can oppose to it another system for which he makes a knowledge-claim. If the latter, which is literally philosophical revolution, then he must be responsible. Responsibility demands that in making a knowledge-claim for a contrary system he avoid the philosophical dead-ends of past revolutionaries, that he knows thoroughly the metaphysics he is rejecting, and that he understand fully the seriousness of his action. The systematic thought of such a person could perhaps have a therapeutic value for most teachers of philosophy.

The other alternative is skepticism. No one is to be denied the right to believe that metaphysical knowledge is impossible. But he can hardly be a teacher of philosophy if he has nothing to teach. Of course, because of the unique, reflexive nature of philosophy, the denial of metaphysical truth is itself a "philosophy." However, the question at issue is whether the teacher of metaphysics and the metaphysical nihilist should both be accorded equal rights institutionally and professionally. It may be said that such a person can teach other subjects than metaphysics, for example, mathematical logic, linguistics, or the history of philosophy. And so they may. Overlooking for the moment whether there is any such thing as "mathematical logic" that is other than mathematics, it can be pointed out that the mathematics, language, and history departments exist for such subjects, and that it would be less confusing if such teachers were there.

But, it will be said, surely such a subject as the history of philosophy is fundamentally philosophy, and hence is a proper subject for the philosophy department. Why, then, cannot a skeptic in metaphysics teach it? The answer is that we should be clear as to who is doing what. Eliminate metaphysics from the history of philosophy and very little is left. And even that little that is left would have to be understood in the terms of the sociologist or psychiatrist. If metaphysics is fiction, there is little excuse for having a department in higher learning devoted to its perpetuation — any more than there would be justification for a department to teach the history of astrology. What the metaphysical skeptic can do is teach the history of ideas, not the history of philosophy. If there is no philosophical knowledge, at least there is historical knowledge, for it is a fact

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that Aristotle did have *this* idea and Descartes did have *that* idea. By reducing philosophy to history, and then transferring himself to the history department, the metaphysical skeptic can both rescue his integrity and save his professional respectability. For now he can *really* know something, and also have something to teach.

To sum up the last few paragraphs, our suggestion is not that anyone's freedom be restricted, but rather that his freedom be a responsible one.

*Idealism does not satisfy the criteria.* Let us now turn to the history of philosophy and see if we can find a system of metaphysics which satisfies the criteria. We know in advance that the thought of any one man will not be satisfactory. We shall have to look for some metaphysical tradition and development. We suggest that idealism, materialism, and moderate realism, exhaust the possibilities. Of course the names given to philosophical positions are more than three. But we must not confuse a genus with a species, or the essence of a position with some particular mode of expression of it. For example pragmatism is not really a third alternative. Pragmatism may take an idealistic or a materialistic form, and is not on the same coordinate level as idealism and materialism. Likewise, positivism is the name for a philosophical position which, according to the mode of expression, may take the form of idealism, materialism, or skepticism.

Does idealism satisfy the criteria which are necessary in order that metaphysics may have a knowledge-claim? The term "idealism" is ambiguous. It may refer to a metaphysical development stemming from a Platonism. If so, then idealism is not in this sense incompatible with realism, but is merely one historical expression of it. As a position distinct from realism, idealism in modern times refers to that which is the outgrowth of the attempt to deal with certain difficulties of the philosophy of Descartes. In general, modern idealism has developed from the assumption that what we know are our ideas. An idea or concept ceases to be *that by which* we know things. Rather, it becomes *what* is known. In obliterating the distinction between intentional being and real being idealism fails to meet the criterion of autonomy. Knowing and making, cognition and creation, are confused. Accordingly as will, desire, interest, or feeling is selected and emphasized the subjective ceases to be the instrument by which the objective is known, but rather becomes that in terms of which the objective world is made or created. Because of this subjectivism it was inevitable that a plurality of metaphysical systems would follow, for if what we know are our ideas, and different people have different ideas, than a variety of worlds would have to be constructed. The unity in these various idealistic systems has consisted in a mutual rejection of realism, and positively, a mutual agreement that each philosopher should have the freedom of system construction.

*Materialism does not satisfy the criteria.* Materialism is another metaphysical system for which a knowledge-claim may be made. Whether we use the term

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"materialism" or "naturalism" does not make much difference. The name "materialism" stands for a rather definite metaphysical system. Naturalism is ambiguous. It may stand for a methodology which is based upon, and limited to, the methods of the physical sciences. As a name for a metaphysics naturalism has included almost everything from a pantheistic idealism to a strict, old-fashioned materialism. We prefer to use the term "materialism" because it stands for a positive metaphysical thesis, namely, the ontological primacy of inorganic matter.

Does materialism satisfy the criteria we have mentioned? It may seem so with respect to continuity and autonomy. One might argue that materialism is as old as any metaphysical system, having a history beginning at least with Democritus and continuing to the present. Second, it is extremely influential in a good part of the world today. And there is a unity in materialism which constitutes its essence and which has persisted through all the differences of philosophical positions taken by individual materialists.

However, the satisfaction of the criteria is only apparent. Materialism does not satisfy the criterion of autonomy, and hence not even the criterion of continuity. To see why this is so we must turn to the history of philosophy. The materialism of Democritus does satisfy in part the criterion of autonomy. There was presumably a knowledge-claim made for his system. There was no confusion of cognition with making or doing. For we will remember that while most of the atoms affected the sense organs, some atoms got through and hit the smooth soul atoms directly, and hence man can know being as it really is. The point to be made is that in his metaphysics Democritus believed that cognition was involved, that we can know things as they really are. If metaphysics is useful, it is because it is true—and not conversely.

When we turn to the materialism of modern times we find that the situation is quite different. Matter ceases to be a cognitive category and becomes a category useful for the purposes of doing; e.g., it becomes an instrument for anti-clerical purposes, for the world revolution, for the secular control of education, or whatnot.

*Realism.* If neither idealism nor materialism satisfies the criteria of autonomy and continuity, we find that the realism of the Aristotelian-Aquinas tradition does. The continuity consists in the doctrines of abstraction, hylomorphism, being as analogous, the formal identity but material diversity between thought and existence, essence and existence as requiring each other. Perhaps the most important principle in the continuity is that act accounts for potency, and not conversely, and which is sometimes called the "*ex nihilo nihil fit*" doctrine. A second very important principle is the distinction between "knowing" and either "making" or "doing."

And now for some comments and questions.

- 1) This is, of course, the *philosophia perennis*. So far from this being disturbing, it should be welcomed. The burden of proof lies with the objector. For where else would one expect to find metaphysical truth?

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2) The continuity of realism is a continuity in development. It is not a static continuity. Part of realism is explicit in Aristotle, part only implicit, and a part may actually be incompatible with one or more Aristotelian propositions. The point is that individual philosophers are instrumental in the development. If one man sees more than others because he stands on their shoulders, his name may be identified with the system. And so, with Aquinas. The only error would be to suppose that metaphysical finality is to be found in the work of any one man. Also, in thinking of Aquinas here, reference is to matters of reason, not to the content of revelation.

3) It may be wondered where Plato fits into the pictures. And is there not another tradition—that of Augustine, Pascal, Kierkegaard? Plato may be said to be in the realistic tradition. Certainly he has little in common with modern idealism, which is chiefly epistemological. Realism is usually associated with the name of Aristotle rather than Plato because, in its development, the more moderate view of the status of universals was accepted.

*Existentialism.* With regard to the other three men, we may ask if they belong to some other system of continuous development which is neither idealism nor realism, and yet one for which a knowledge-claim is made. The answer must be in the negative. The tradition may be called "existentialist." As such it is not on the same co-ordinate level with realism, but can really only be understood in terms of it. In the development of realism, which takes into account both existence and essence, one might expect an overemphasis here and there on either essence or existence. Hence, Augustine may be said to represent an existentialist emphasis within realism. The case of Kierkegaard is somewhat different. The existentialist emphasis now becomes the beginning of existentialism. Of course, it is all understandable as a reaction against an Hegelian idealism in which intentional and real being had become identified, and existence is reduced to essence. Whatever positive truth existentialism has is embodied in realism. Negatively, it has a truth-claim in its critique of idealism. But it is hardly an autonomous metaphysics to be set in opposition to realism.

Contemporary existentialism is something still different, for much of it is in opposition not only to realism but to all metaphysics. As such it is a mode of skepticism. A distinction must be made between a philosophy which attempts to draw the conclusion of skepticism, and one which is based upon the premise of skepticism. Much of contemporary existentialism is the latter, an ideology constructed precisely because we can't know, but also because it "meets our needs" in various ways. Much of Protestant existentialism is of this kind. The need to be met is the necessity of making a "commitment." Here we have an interesting, though tragic, phenomenon which might be called "theological positivism." For the skepticism of positivism is not refuted, but rather supplemented by an existential act called a commitment. But there is a great deal of difference between a faith commitment which goes beyond reason after first going through it, and on the

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other hand, a commitment made in abstraction from truths of reason. It marks the difference between a faith that is non-rational and a faith that is irrational. Modern Protestantism finds itself experiencing an uneasy tension when it accepts a philosophical nihilism as the link between experimental science founded on instrumental reason, and a religious ideology posited as an act of will.

*Philosophy and ideology.* Modern philosophy has come to the end of an era, and the predicament of the teacher of philosophy is witness to the fact. Unwittingly positivism has made an important contribution, for it has functioned as both cause and effect in the closing of the era. Both moderate realism and positivism agree that either there is metaphysical truth or there isn't. Each takes its stand accordingly. If the implications of this were followed out in practice it would mean that once more departments of philosophy could teach philosophy. Those who deny the possibility of metaphysical truth could teach something else, whatever it is that they claim to know. We would then not have the anomaly of a department of philosophy which exists in order to show that there is no philosophical truth.

But isn't the denial of philosophy also philosophy? Yes and no. Since the nature of truth and the limitations of man's knowledge are philosophical problems, philosophy is unique among all other subjects in its reflexive nature—the ability both to examine itself and deny itself. The latter is skepticism and at the same time is philosophy. We have a peculiar situation here in which one knows enough about reality and being to know that knowing is impossible. It might be well for a department of philosophy to have a teacher of this kind, one whose function is that of a devil's advocate, to demonstrate forever and forever that metaphysics is impossible, and that he knows this and can "prove" it.

Now this kind of skepticism, however strange and contradictory it may seem, can be classified as philosophy. But this kind develops as a *conclusion* to what pretends to be a rational demonstration. In this case, at least some cognitive claim is made. Perhaps Hume said the last word in this respect, and having said it, he could joyfully return to his backgammon game with the boys. In a negative sort of way it is conceivable that this type of skepticism might even have a mental-health value for the individual, and also be of positive value against the sinful pride of realists who are always in danger of pretending to know more than they do.

However, this kind of skepticism, which is really a *conclusion* reached by philosophical thought, is often confused with a quite different phenomenon, namely, the kind of so-called thinking which is based upon skepticism as a *premise* or pre-supposition. Precisely because we can't have metaphysical truth, systems of ideas are constructed for "making" or "doing" purposes. Now it makes a great deal of difference whether a system of thought is cognitive, the result of metaphysical truth discovered, and which serves as a guide for the making and doing which is art and individual or social action ,or, on the other hand, a system is an ideological structure having no truth value at all, but which serves as an instrumental means

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for non-cognitive purposes. Strictly speaking, this kind of skepticism is not philosophy at all, and should not be dignified by the name. A much better name, following modern usage rather than etymology, would be "ideology."

The confusion between philosophy and ideology arises because both seem to be dealing with metaphysical ideas. And so, in a sense, they are. But, again, the difference is in how they are dealt with, and for what purpose, cognitive or otherwise. Astronomy and astrology both deal with the stars, but the one is worthy of university status while the other is not. There is no reason for having a department of ideology or mythology in higher education. The historians can give the history of ideologies, the psychologists can correlate various kinds of ideologies with the emotional needs they satisfy, and the social scientists can explain the cultural causes. But there is no need for teachers who are still called "philosophers," to continue to spin out ideologies to keep the others busy.

*The corruption of philosophy and the problem of the teacher.* Contemporary philosophy is reaping what Kant sowed, and he in turn reaped what was sown by Descartes—truly the father of modern philosophy, for his thought was based upon the denial of the two criteria we have mentioned. By doubt Descartes eliminated continuity. One can be sympathetic with the man and his problems, but Descartes should have not attempted a complete break with the past and at the same time made a truth claim. In equating extension and matter Descartes identified form and matter. Another way of putting it is that he tried to turn a category of positive science into a metaphysical category. In this way the autonomy of metaphysics was denied.

With the identification of form and matter the way was open to identify Being with either. The alternatives became idealism and materialism. The answer of the former, stemming from the critical philosophy was this, that if we can not know reality we can create it. Or, we can know only what we create. The age of the creation of ideological superstructures had arrived in full actuality. With unanswerable logic the critique of Marx follows. The creation of ideological structures through mentation is a symptom of sickness. Healthy-minded people do not need to do it. Hence, the poverty of philosophy. The world is material and the problem is to change it. But if idealism is not knowledge, neither is materialism. And so for Marx and his followers, although they were not fully aware of it, matter ceases to be primarily a cognitive category, but rather becomes a technological weapon in a planned program of social action. This was also essentially the direction of John Dewey's "reconstruction of philosophy."

We see, then, how philosophy in modern times ceased to be concerned with knowing, and was identified with either making or doing. The name "philosophy" became identified with either a strange form of mental art creation or a science of human behavior. The ethical nihilism and moral relativism, which is the logical consequence, came out into the open in the teaching in higher education and, as

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might have been expected, in practice in a variety of political forms.

The plight of the philosopher, Christian or otherwise, is that now he has nowhere to rest his head. With respect to metaphysics, the denial of continuity allowed everyone "to get into the act," whether qualified or not. The denial of autonomy allowed almost any category to be selected and generalized into an ideology. With this reduction of metaphysics to ideology the philosopher finally wakes up to the fact that his subject has been pushed to a peripheral position in university curricula, and that his colleagues in other departments are having a merry time creating ideological superstructures from *real* knowledge—the *real* knowledge being, of course, that which goes under their department names.

*Protestantism and the prior requirement of metaphysical truths.* This fragmentation on the intellectual plane has its spiritual correlate in the fortunes and misfortunes of Protestantism. We are not saying that the corruption of the intellect has been wholly responsible for the theological fragmentation of Protestantism; but surely there is some relation, unless the history of the last four centuries is to be dismissed. We need not consider that history now. It will suffice to recall that the base of most Protestant theology has been metaphysical idealism and/or skepticism. This raises a question. Whatever may be the causes of the theological and institutional fragmentation of Protestantism—and again we may admit that they transcend the intellectual—the unity to be reconstructed through the ecumenical movement implies a prior unity, of at least a minimum, on the philosophical level.

There are real issues on the level of faith alone. But what the ecumenical leaders must realize is that there are many issues which appear to be on the level of faith but which are really on the level of reason. Another kind of problem is one which is argued on the level of faith because there are real theological differences, but which is fruitless because of basic metaphysical differences which are not recognized. The failure to distinguish among these three kinds of issues may doom the ecumenical movement.

If contemporary Protestantism is to meet the forces of evil in the world today, it must first purify the corruption in its own soul. It is not enough to enter battle armed with the instrumental reason of technology, on the one hand, and a commitment to the Bible, on the other—for the one hand knows not what the other is doing. The purging of its own anti-intellectualism and philosophical nihilism is imperative for Protestantism. It is also a prerequisite to its own stability, health, and unity, as well as to the final unity with non-Protestant Christians. Reduction in mere quantity of fragmentation will never be sufficient.

To this task the Christian philosopher can make an important contribution.

## Theological and Religious Scepticism

RICHARD H. POPKIN



HE "GREAT INFIDEL," David Hume, said at the conclusion of the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, "To be a philosophical sceptic is in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian."<sup>1</sup> This rather strange claim has been made over and over again in various religious traditions, and many of those who have made it have been accused, with some justice, of blatant insincerity. What I wish to discuss here is the two offsprings of such a view, agnosticism and complete faith. Non-believers and believers have "grounded" their case in complete doubt. Hume and Kierkegaard, Bayle and Pascal, have argued to show the inability of rational evidence to support religious and theological views. Sometimes the apparent intent has been to establish belief, and sometimes to destroy it. By examining three cases of philosophical scepticism—that of Francois de La Mothe Le Vayer, Pierre Bayle, and Søren Kierkegaard, I shall try to exhibit a certain unity of thought on the relation of faith and reason, and then raise a perplexing problem—how does one tell who are the faithless and who are the faithful if they are all brothers in Pyrrho—sceptics to the core?

The sixteenth century saw the rise of a new kind of philosopher, the "nouveau Pyrrhonien." The New Pyrrhonist differed from his Greek ancestor primarily in that he *claimed to be* a defender of the faith, a Christian sceptic. His doubts led not to indifference to, or denial of, the Christian religion, but, he said, to its whole-hearted affirmation. He opposed dogmatists, positive philosophers and theologians, as enemies of simple, faithful Christianity. His view, he claimed, was that of St. Paul, as presented in I Corinthians 1, 19-23.

"For it is written, I will destroy the Wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

"Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

"For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom."

"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness."

The marriage of the Cross of Christ and the doubts of Pyrrho was presented by Gentian Hervet,<sup>2</sup> the secretary of the Cardinal of Lorraine, and by Michel de Montaigne.<sup>3</sup> Christianity based on doubt alone was proclaimed the cure-all to heresy

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<sup>1</sup>David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Norman Kemp Smith, (London, Edinburgh 1947), p. 228.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. preface by Hervet to Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicos*, (Geneva 1569). This preface is summarized by Jean Grenier in his edition of *Oeuvres Choisies de Sextus Empiricus*, (Paris 1948), pp. 24-25, and in his "Le Sceptique Masqué. Le Mothe Le Vayer," *Table Ronde*, No. 22, (Oct. 1949), pp. 1506-1507.

<sup>3</sup>Michel de Montaigne, "Apologie de Raimond Sebond," Book II, chap. XII of *Les Essais de Michel de Montaigne*, Vol. II, ed. Pierre Villey, (Paris 1922).

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by Montaigne's adopted son and heir, the priest, Pierre Charron.<sup>4</sup> Sceptical Christianity à la Charron was endorsed by the Bishop of Boulogne,<sup>5</sup> and defended as the essential teaching of St. Augustine by the great Jansenist, St. Cyran.<sup>6</sup> Many theologians paid homage to this "nouveau Pyrrhonisme." But the new scepticism also emerged in *libertin* clothing. This most orthodox teaching turned up as the cover of the free-thinkers, the *esprits-forts*. If both sincere Christians and dubious *libertins* subscribed to sceptical Christianity, who could tell the believer from the non-believer?

This problem appears rather strongly in the case of François de La Mothe Le Vayer, "le sceptique chrétien," who was the *precepteur* of the dauphin of France, and Charron's successor as the heir to the intellectual estate, and spirit of Montaigne.<sup>7</sup>

La Mothe Le Vayer presented the classical arguments from the text of Sextus Empiricus, which he referred to as "a divine book," and "our Decalogue," to combat all the claims to knowledge in philosophy, science, and morality. The realization of the strength of the Pyrronian doubts, or the inability of man to know anything by rational means, La Mothe Le Vayer claimed, was part and parcel of true Christianity as presented by St. Paul.<sup>8</sup> The doubts of Pyrrho purge man of error and presumption, of vain schemes for measuring divine matters by human rules or prejudices. When we have absorbed the sceptical attitude of *epoché* then we are ready to accept the truths of Christianity by faith alone.

"It was not then either impertinence nor impiety on my part to maintain that St. Paul taught us to believe, and not to know . . . , he gave us such positive lessons in the vanity — even the nullity — of all human sciences, that he was part of our Sceptical school. . . . Let us then make strong profession of the honorable ignorance of our well-loved Sceptique, since it is that alone which can prepare for us the way to revealed knowledge of divinity, and all the other sects of philosophy only take us away from it."<sup>9</sup>

The soul of the Christian sceptic is like a clear field, purged of bad plants—the dangerous maxims and arguments of the philosophers. Once cleared it can

<sup>4</sup>Pierre Charron, *De la Sagesse*, Book II, chap. ii, in *Toutes les Oeuvres de Pierre Charron Parisien, Docteur es Droits, Chantre et Chanoine*, (Paris 1635); and *Petit Traité de Sagesse*, (Paris 1635), chap. IV, pp. 223-226.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. C. L. Auvray, "Lettres de Pierre Charron à Gabriel Michel de la Rochemaillet," *Revue d'Histoire Littéraire de la France*, I (1894), pp. 308-309, esp. letters XXXII; XXXIV, XXXVII, and XLV.

<sup>6</sup>Jean Duvergier du Hauranne (St. Cyran), *La Somme des Fautes et Faussetez Capitales Contenues en la Somme Théologique du Pere Francois Garasse de la Compagnie de Jesus*, (Paris 1626), Book II, pp. 321-469.

<sup>7</sup>For details about La Mothe Le Vayer, see introduction by Ernest Tisserand to Francois de La Mothe Le Vayer, *Deux Dialogues*, (Paris 1922), pp. 11-58; and Rene Pintard, *Le Libertinage Erudit dans la première moitié du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris 1943), Vol. I, esp. Part II, chap. I, sec. III and Part III, chap. III.

<sup>8</sup>François de La Mothe Le Vayer, *Prose Chagrine*, in *Oeuvres de Francoit de La Mothe Le Vayer*, (Paris 1669), Vol. IX, p. 360.

<sup>9</sup>La Mothe Le Vayer, "De la diversité des Religions," in *Cinq Dialogues Faits à l'imitation des Anciens, par Oratius Tubero*, (Mons 1671), pp. 329-330.

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accept the divine Revelation.<sup>10</sup> The Christian Sceptic is like the classical Pyrrhonist in doubting all claims to rational knowledge. He is unlike his classical brother-in-arms in that he gives up his doubting with regard to religious matters. He leaves his doubts and his reason at the foot of the altar; and accepts on faith alone.<sup>11</sup>

A somewhat similar view was presented by Pierre Bayle, "La Philosophe de Rotterdam." Bayle, the late 17th century "master of them that know," was always arguing to show that all philosophical theories and theorizing are "the high-road to Pyrrhonism," and therefore one should give up reasoning and submit humbly to divine truths. Bayle argued throughout his writings, and especially in his *Dictionary* that rational enquiry ends always in complete doubt, and therefore one ought to give up the futile search within philosophy for certitude by natural reason, and turn instead to the supernatural light. And not only does all philosophizing lead to doubt, but it also ends up in complete conflict with religion, which is to be accepted by faith alone.

He presented his case in rather startling fashion in his article on "Pyrrho,"<sup>12</sup> where Bayle claimed (a) that modern philosophy leads to a complete Pyrrhonism, and (b) that the Christian religion furnished invincible arms to the sceptic in the area of rational discourse. Anyone who seriously believed the Christian doctrine of Transubstantiation would have to renounce the most evident maxims of human reasoning, such as that the same being cannot be in two places at the same time, etc. The sceptic can always bring up insoluble puzzles about Christian theology. The only resolution is to renounce reason as a "guide and ask for a better one. This is the great step towards the Christian religion, for it wishes that we obtain from God the knowledge of what we ought to believe and do, it wishes that we make our understanding the obedient slave of Faith."<sup>13</sup>

The Calvinist Consistory of Rotterdam found Bayle's position hard to comprehend, and failed to see how he could be an advocate of their religion if he insisted that neither philosophy nor Christian theology could furnish a rational answer to Pyrrhonian doubts (or Manichean objections, as Bayle also argued.) Bayle insisted that he was trying to show the essence of Calvinism to the detriment of the sceptics, and offered to add an appendix making it all clear in return for the Consistory's approval.<sup>14</sup>

The "Eclaircissement sur les Pyrrhoniens"<sup>15</sup> is one of Bayle's most masterful essays. He started off with his thesis that the Christian religion is of a super-

<sup>10</sup>La Mothe Le Vayer, *Prose Chagrine*, p. 362, and "De Pyrrhon, et de la Secte Sceptique," in *De la Vertu des Payens, Oeuvres*, Vol. V, p. 232.

<sup>11</sup>La Mothe Le Vayer, *Prose Chagrine*, p. 361, and "De Pyrrhon," p. 234.

<sup>12</sup>Pierre Bayle, "Pyrrhon" *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique*, (Amsterdam 1740), Vol. III, pp. 731-736, esp. Rem. B and C.

<sup>13</sup>Bayle, "Pyrrhon" Rem. C, pp. 733-734.

<sup>14</sup>"Actes du Consistoire de l'Eglise Wallonne de Rotterdam, concernant le Dictionnaire Historique et Critique de Mr. Bayle," in Bayle, *Dictionnaire*, Vol. I, pp. CXV-CXX.

<sup>15</sup>Bayle, "III: Eclaircissement. Que ce qui a été dit du Pyrrhonisme, dans ce Dictionnaire, ne peut point préjudicier à la Religion," *Dictionnaire*, Vol. IV, pp. 641-647.

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natural order, based on God's Word alone "*not so that we may comprehend it, but that we may believe it with all the humility due to the infinite being.*"<sup>16</sup> Bayle then explored the nature of faith, and insisted that the crucial feature of faith is that it is based on *no* evidence whatsoever. This he took to be St. Paul's point in I Corinthians, faith is foolishness to those that seek rational wisdom. The faith is accepted blindly, on no evidence at all. If there were the slightest evidence, it would cease to be faith and become a scientific hypothesis. A rational or defensible faith is a contradiction in terms. Rational enquiry ends only in Pyrrhonism. The certitude of faith is based on nothing other than that one believes it.<sup>17</sup> To make his view clear, Bayle quoted a passage about a conversation between the Marshal d' Hocquincourt and a priest from the writings of his irreligious friend, Charles St. Evremond, (Bayle admitted this quotation set the contention "in a ridiculous light"<sup>18</sup>).

*"The Devil take me if I believed anything. . . . But since that time I could bear to be crucified for Religion. It is not that I see more reason in it than I did before; on the contrary, I see less than ever but I know not what to say, for I would submit to be crucified without knowing why or wherefore. So much the better, my Lord, replied the father, twanging it very devoutly through the nose, so much the better: these are not human impulses, but are inspired by heaven. Away with reason: this is the true Religion, away with reason. What an extraordinary grace, my Lord, has heaven bestowed on you!"<sup>19</sup>*

For whatever reasons he might have had, Bayle argued on all topics to bring about complete scepticism, and then maintained that his point was to show people the true picture of Christian faith—an irrational, indefensible, nonsensical, immoral belief. He insisted "I am a good Protestant, in the true sense of the word, for at the bottom of my soul, I protest against all that is said and all that is done."<sup>20</sup> He was, he claimed, the true descendent of Calvin.

A view that is in many ways extremely like that of Bayle was developed most forcefully by Søren Kierkegaard, especially in *Philosophical Fragments*, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, and *Training in Christianity*. Kierkegaard, like Bayle, argued for a general scepticism about the possibility of genuine, rational, necessary knowledge about the world, and insisted on the fundamentally irrational and indefensible character of religious belief.

The *Fragments* and the *Postscript* present us with a type of sceptical onslaught, directed primarily against the kind of philosophical system developed by the German idealists. Necessary knowledge can only be found on an ideal level, and consists merely of the logical consequences of certain concepts and assumptions. One can demonstrate that it follows necessarily from the concept of a Perfect Being that He exists, but this just shows something about the concept, and has nothing

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 641.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 642-645.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 645.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 645.

<sup>20</sup>This is what Bayle told the Cardinal de Polignac according to De Boze's "Eloge de M. Le Cardinal de Polignac," in Polignac's *L'Anti-Lurece*, (Paris 1749), Vol. I, p. 13.

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to do with factual existence, or the existential world.<sup>21</sup> A system, a framework in which it is possible to give necessary and sufficient grounds for propositions, is possible, but cannot in any way be connected to factual or existential conclusions.<sup>22</sup> "Factual existence is wholly indifferent to any and all variations in essence."<sup>23</sup> The realm in which logical necessity occurs is a realm in which historical predicates never apply. The eternal world contains necessary, logical truth. The historical world, the world in which things come into being, contains no necessary relations, "Nothing ever comes into being with necessity . . . Nothing that comes into being does so by virtue of a logical ground."<sup>24</sup>

This much of the Kierkegaardian argument is basically similar to Hume's case for "epistemological scepticism" with regard to knowledge, in this sense of necessarily certain and true propositions, about the world of experience.<sup>25</sup> But what conclusion does one reach from seeing that grounds cannot be found for facts, nor facts be found which prove beyond a shadow of a doubt, that certain grounding conditions exist behind the world of facts? In the *Fragments*, Kierkegaard suggested two alternative courses, resolve to doubt all and become a practicing Pyrrhonist, or resolve to believe and become a man of faith. "Belief is the opposite of doubt . . . neither of them is a cognitive act; they are opposite passions."<sup>26</sup> The sceptic "draws no conclusion from fear of being deceived,"<sup>27</sup> the man of faith resolves to take the leap, and run the risk of committing himself to error, but he believes.<sup>28</sup>

The Christian believer has committed himself to an impossible view, that God has existed in the historical world, that Jesus, a member of the realm of change, the factual universe, is the eternal, perfect being. "Christianity is therefore not a doctrine, but the fact that God has existed."<sup>29</sup> But this "is not an ordinary historical fact, but a fact based on a self-contradiction."<sup>30</sup> Nothing in the historical world can be necessary, and God is the necessary being. Demonstrations about the nature of God can only prove that it is impossible for God to be part of the historical world. Factual information about Jesus can only relate to historical properties of Jesus, i.e. to Jesus as a human being. And "No knowledge can have for its object the absurdity that the eternal is the historical."<sup>31</sup> Hence the Christian believer accepts his faith

<sup>21</sup>Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments, or a Fragment of Philosophy*, (Princeton 1946), pp. 31-34, esp. 32-33 n. 2.

<sup>22</sup>Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, (Princeton 1944), pp. 99-113.

<sup>23</sup>Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, pp. 33n.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>25</sup>This matter has been treated in Richard H. Popkin, "Hume and Kierkegaard," *Journal of Religion*, XXXI (1951), pp. 274-281; and Philip Merlan, "Hume and Hamann," *Personalist*, XXXII (1951), pp. 11-18.

<sup>26</sup>Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, p. 69.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 68 n.

<sup>29</sup>Kierkegaard, *Postscript*, p. 291.

<sup>30</sup>Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, p. 71.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 50.

### THEOLOGICAL AND RELIGIOUS SCEPTICISM

in the extreme paradox that Jesus was and is God, on no evidence—neither on the basis of logical grounds nor empirical finding. As far as the foundation of his views are concerned, he can only say with Hume,

"So that upon the whole we may conclude that the *Christian Religion* not only was at first attended with miracles, but even to this day cannot be believed by any reasonable person without them. Mere reason is not sufficient to convince us of its veracity; and whoever is moved by *Faith* to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience."<sup>32</sup>

Thus Kierkegaard, like Bayle and La Mothe Le Vayer, coupled a general scepticism about the possibility of obtaining necessary knowledge about the world with an avowal of Christian belief based on no rational grounds. But, and herein lies the crucial difference for the present discussion, practically no one has doubted that Kierkegaard was a religious believer, and practically no one has believed that La Mothe Le Vayer or Bayle was. Starting with their contemporaries,<sup>33</sup> down to the present generation of scholars of 17th century France, La Mothe Le Vayer and Bayle have been accused of blatant insincerity in their avowal of Christian beliefs. Grenier and Pintard have interpreted La Mothe Le Vayer as "un sceptique masqué" who is really a complete non-believer, and who does not even have the courage of Pyrrho to claim that he is in doubt about everything.<sup>34</sup> Bayle is usually interpreted as a genuine non-believer, who cloaks his views in a guise more acceptable to his age.<sup>35</sup>

And thus the problem arises, how does one tell if the Christian sceptic is wearing a mask, or is the knight of faith? The Christian sceptics share in common a view which I shall call "theological scepticism," a doubt concerning the reasons offered for the faith. The question at issue is whether one who is a theological sceptic has, or has not accepted a "religious scepticism," a doubt concerning the faith. Theological scepticism does not entail religious scepticism. If one doubts all the reasons that may be offered for the faith, this does not require that one doubt the faith, since the factors that induce belief in this case may have nothing to do with the evidence for the belief. But, on the other hand, theological scepticism certainly constitutes no argument in favor of belief. What we usually call a "rational attitude" is that one's beliefs are conditioned to the soundness of the evidence in support of them. But it is all too common to find that there are people who come to beliefs in a "non-rational" manner.

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<sup>32</sup>David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Selby-Bigge ed., (Oxford 1951), p. 131.

<sup>33</sup>Antoine Arnauld, *De la Nécessité de la Foy Jesus- Christ pour être sauvé*, (Paris 1701) Vol. II, esp. pp. 181-182 and 208-210; and Pierre Jurieu, *Le Philosophe de Roterdam Accusé, Atteint et Convaincu*, (Amsterdam 1706).

<sup>34</sup>Grenier, "Le Sceptique Masqué," esp. p. 1512; and Pintard, *Le Libertinage Erudit*, esp. Part II, chap. 1 sec. III, "Un Voluptueux Incrédule: La Mothe Le Vayer," Vol. 1, pp. 131-147.

<sup>35</sup>See, for instance, the account given by John M. Robertson, in his *A Short History of Free Thought Ancient and Modern*, 3rd ed. (London 1915), Vol. II, pp. 139-140.

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If a man states that there is and can be no evidence that Christianity is true, and that he believes Christianity is true, how do we tell if the man does in fact believe Christianity is true? The cognitive content of his writings, namely his theological scepticism, is compatible with his actual belief or non-belief. The believer believes "in virtue of the absurd," and the non-believer takes his doubts of the evidence seriously. But neither attitude follows, in a logical sense, from the arguments used to establish theological scepticism.

Some critics of Bayle and La Mothe Le Vayer have insisted that a Christian cannot be a sceptic, he must not only believe, but have both reasons for what he believes and understanding of his faith.<sup>36</sup> How can one accept the Revelation and doubt the proposition, "There is a Revelation?"<sup>37</sup> How can one have a faith, without knowing what one believes?<sup>38</sup> These criticisms point out the strangeness of religion based on complete doubt. But if these criticisms are decisive against Bayle or La Mothe Le Vayer, they would seem to be equally telling against Kierkegaard or Pascal, and would make all Christian sceptics suspect. Jean Grenier, in his examination of La Mothe Le Vayer, tries to direct his fire only against this sceptic Christian, and not all, and insists La Mothe Le Vayer is totally unlike Pascal in his belief. "If he comes close to Pascal in appearance, it is in order to keep away from him more completely in the end."<sup>39</sup> La Mothe Le Vayer's faith "bears no relation to that of Pascal and Tertullien. La Mothe Le Vayer remains a sceptic; he is not a fideist."<sup>40</sup> But how does one tell that they are so far apart? The same type of reasoning and the same view, theological scepticism, occurs in each. There is practically nothing that is said by Kierkegaard or Pascal that is not also said by La Mothe Le Vayer or Bayle.

Perhaps one tells the believer from the non-believer by his actions, or by the flavor of his writing. The first standard raises the difficulty all over again. Montaigne was a regular churchgoer, his disciple Charron was a priest, La Mothe Le Vayer's son was a priest, Bayle was a member in good standing of the French Reformed Church. If all these people were only conformists, it is not their actions that provide a clue.

As to the flavor of their works, the satirical style of Bayle may, for all we know, have been just as compatible with true belief, as the bitter nastiness of Kierkegaard's *Attack upon Christendom*. No non-believer, Tom Paine and Nietzsche not excepted, has ever written as forceful a denunciation of religious

<sup>36</sup>Grenier, "Le Sceptique Masqué," pp. 1509 and 1511. Grenier points out that the Catholic Church, through the Vatican Council of 1870 has categorically denied that scepticism can be reconciled with Christianity.

<sup>37</sup>This criticism was raised by a reviewer of the *Nouvelles Lettres de Pierre Bayle*, in *Nouvelle Bibliotheque*, III (1739), p. 412.

<sup>38</sup>Grenier, "Le Sceptique Masqué," p. 1511.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 1509.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 1511.

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practice as did Kierkegaard. "By their fruits shall ye know them"—but shall we? The fruits of the suspected ones—Montaigne, Charron, and even Bayle—have led some recent writers to reconsider the age-old suspicions.<sup>41</sup>

Kierkegaard has provided perhaps the best explanation for this phenomenon of the indistinguishability of the knights of faith and the non-believers. *Fear and Trembling* presents us with a picture of a true believer, if he is a true believer. Abraham, the hero of faith, is not identifiable by outward signs, and cannot communicate his faith. His discernible movements are finite, are part of the ordinary world, and hence in all visible aspects can be duplicated. Even the demons we are introduced to, perform laudable actions.<sup>42</sup> It is the character of belief that its effects as seen are all ordinary, and that its content cannot be communicated. Hence, only Abraham can tell if he acts "in virtue of the absurd," or from ordinary motivation. And, as the *Fragments* and *Training in Christianity* insist, not only is the true believer unrecognizable, so also is God. The historical Jesus looks and acts like a man. No empirical investigation or rational inquiry will reveal His true nature. It is not by His fruits, that He is known, but in spite of them.<sup>43</sup>

In terms of this analysis of Kierkegaard's there is no answer to our problem, except a subjective one. Each one of us, if he is sincere, may be able to tell which camp we are in. But who can judge another? Only God could possibly see inside to know whether a theological sceptic was sincere in his religious belief. The signs we take as probable—reputation, external actions, and implied attitude—may all be misleading. The knight of faith may snarl, and the religious sceptic speak in dulcet tones resembling those of angels.

Theological scepticism turns out to be a two way street, on which it is never possible to be sure which way the theological sceptic is moving—towards religious scepticism or religious belief. Theoretical scepticism may be, as Hume suggested the first step towards becoming a true and believing Christian, but whether it actually is, no one can ever be sure. The direction one has taken on arriving on the street can never be completely discerned by other men.

"Tremble—for God is in one sense so infinitely easy to hoax"<sup>44</sup> so spake Kierkegaard. God may be hoaxable because of His exalted position. In a different sense, man is easy to hoax—because he does not have the means of discerning the heart or mind of others with thoroughness or complete accuracy.

Bayle once said, in defending himself against those who accused him of having

<sup>41</sup>See, for instance, W. H. Barber, "Pierre Bayle: Faith and Reason" in *The French Mind: Studies in Honour of Gustave Rudler*, (Oxford 1952), pp. 109-125; and Clément Sclafert, "Montaigne et Maldonat," *Bulletin de Littérature Ecclésiastique*, LII (1951), pp. 65-93 and 129-146.

<sup>42</sup>Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, (Princeton 1945), esp. pp. 17-18, and 124-166.

<sup>43</sup>Kierkegaard, *Fragments*, "The Case of the Contemporary Disciple," pp. 44-58, and "Supplement: Application," pp. 71-73; and *Training in Christianity*, (London 1941), esp. pp. 26-39.

<sup>44</sup>Kierkegaard, *Attack upon "Christendom"*, (Princeton 1944), p. 255.

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no religion because he reported the arguments human reason can offer against the faith, "They ought to notice that when I say such things, I add this corrective; we ought to learn by the feebleness of our natural lights, that we must have recourse to those of revelation, and submit humbly to the authority of God and ask him for grace. Can one say anything more orthodox . . .?"<sup>45</sup> Perhaps not. But the question still remains whether "all their Grace is but Hypocrisy?"<sup>46</sup>

Kierkegaard proclaims, "What do I want? Quite simply; I want honesty."<sup>47</sup> But whether we have gotten it from Bayle, La Mothe Le Vayer, Pascal, Montaigne, Hume, or any other theological sceptic, even including Kierkegaard, we will never know with absolute certainty.

<sup>45</sup>"Letter of Bayle to de la Porte, March 15, 1697, part of which is printed in Leo Pierre Courtines, "Bayle and his English Correspondents: Four Unpublished Letters," *Romantic Review*, XXVII (1936) pp. 108-109.

<sup>46</sup>Edward Taylor, "Doubts from Satans Temptations Answered," in *The Poetical Works of Edward Taylor*, (New York 1939), p. 91, where it is said of Satan that,

"To such as God doth Call, he doth reply

That all their Grace is but Hypocrisy."

<sup>47</sup>Kierkegaard, *Attack upon "Christendom"*, p. 37.

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## Books and Publications

### Empiricism and Religion

A Critique of Ryle's *Concept of Mind*

I. T. RAMSEY



If we were gathering together books as landmarks by which to peg out the spread of empiricism in the last half-century, no doubt we would unhesitatingly include, for example, Russell's *Problems of Philosophy*, Moore's *Philosophical Studies*, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, Carnap's *Logical Syntax of Language*, and Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*. But the most recent of these landmarks would certainly be Gilbert Ryle's *Concept of Mind*, published in 1949.

This is not the occasion for a detailed survey of the many particular topics which Ryle treats from the standpoint of logical empiricism—will, emotion, sensation, imagination, memory, dispositions, and so on. Instead, I shall consider here no more than two broad themes which to my mind epitomize the book, and by reference to these themes indicate ways in which I believe Christians have something to learn from contemporary empiricism even though at the same time they may rightly make important reservations.

#### I. Language as Logically Heterogeneous

Ryle starts by condemning a "myth" associated with Descartes, though, as he admits, it has a much older and more complex ancestry. According to this "myth," "every human being is both a body and a mind. . . .

"Human bodies are in space, and are subject to the mechanical laws which govern all other bodies in space. Bodily processes and states can be inspected by external observers. . . .

"But minds are not in space . . . the workings of one mind are not witnessable by other observers; its career is private" (page 11). The upshot is that traditionally "the verbs, nouns and adjectives, with which in ordinary life we describe the wits, characters and higher-grade performances of the people with whom we have to do, are construed as signifying special episodes in their secret histories" (page 15). But by this means mental-conduct concepts are given a logical geography which effectively denies to them any significant and effective use. Their reference is so private and secret as to escape us altogether.

At the same time we must not misunderstand Ryle's contention. He strenuously asserts that he is not "denying that there occur mental processes" (page 22). What he is condemning are ways of talking about them which lead to puzzles. For instance, as he says, it would be generally acknowledged that "a person's thinking, feeling and purposive doing cannot be described solely in the idioms of physics, chemistry and physiology." But it is then assumed that "therefore they must be described in counterpart idioms" (page 18). "As the human body is a complex

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organized unit, so the human mind must be another complex organized unit, though one may be made of a different sort of stuff and with a different sort of structure" (page 18). It is this duplicate language and the pictures associated with it that Ryle is attacking. "I am saying," says Ryle, "that the phrase 'there occur mental processes' does not mean the same sort of thing as 'there occur physical processes'" (page 12). Their grammar is different and many puzzles about "bodies" and "minds" have arisen when these words have been illegitimately related. All attempts "to conjoin or disjoin the two" are at best logically problematical, and at worst may be nonsense. It is as though from reading that "Robert Boyle was the father of Chemistry and brother of the Earl of Cork," we conclude that the Earl of Cork was the uncle of a somewhat curious being called "Chemistry" who had never been seen by the human eye but who was reputed to live in a secret world; and so on.

Here is a logical point which the whole development of empiricism since Russell would underline; a point of general importance which the Christian philosopher, I suggest, ignores at his peril. Contrariwise, he has much to gain by assimilating it. We must be alive to the many logical differences which language displays; differences such as those which Russell called 'type' differences, and Ryle calls 'category' differences. We must not be deceived by grammatical form. As far as its logical structure goes, language is only deceptively homogeneous. "There are nails in my table," and "Abraham Lincoln was intensely good," may have grammatical kinship respectively with "There are electrons in my table," and "God is infinitely good." But logically the first two assertions are quite different from either the third or the fourth, and we should save ourselves a lot of pointless controversy if we remembered that. We should be wise to follow the discreet logical treads of the angels before rushing in with the fools.

So far then we can applaud Ryle's logical insight, and we shall accordingly expect Christian language to display a logical complexity appropriate to its theme. Further, may it not be that many doctrinal puzzles have arisen from a failure to distinguish logical placings which have differed? As an example taken at random, what of *THEOTOKOS*? It is plain that to the Nestorians and the anti-Nestorians the word had a different logical placing altogether, and except in so far as controversy made evident the two different positions, it was pointless. The Nestorians, being hard-headed empiricists who believed in having words whose logical behavior was nothing if not straightforward, protested against any such phrase as "mother of God." They well knew what was meant by (say) "mother of Topsy," and their protest may be read as a protest against assimilating "God" to "Topsy." But of course in so far as the orthodox would only have justified the phrase in reference to what might be called "spiritual devotion," then "mother of God" has a different logical structure altogether. It is rather "mother with a difference," "highly significant mother," "unique mother" and so on. In other words, "of God" is a phrase with an extremely complex logic whose point is to claim something specially significant and unique about this person Mary, whose "motherhood" evokes our devotion.

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### II. The Logic of Mental-Conduct Concepts

So far then we have been considering Ryle's claim that we err if we suppose that language about the mind is logically homogeneous with language about the body; "in describing the workings of a person's mind we are *not* describing a *second set* of shadowy operations" (page 50; italics mine). But there is a second and more positive theme which runs through the book. Continuing the sentence I have just quoted, Ryle says that what in fact we are describing are certain phases of his one career; namely, the ways in which parts of his conduct are managed. The sense in which we 'explain' his actions must be not that we infer to occult causes, but that we subsume under hypothetical and semi-hypothetical propositions. In other words, we must elucidate all mental-conduct concepts by reference to dispositions which means by reference ultimately to observable situations. The facts, Ryle would say, are what they always were. But if we would talk of them in the clearest way we must do it along dispositional lines. Here is Ryle's major hint for the logical geography of mental conduct concepts. If their logical mapwork seems rather complex, as undoubtedly it does, such complexity is only that of dispositional words, which we relate to observable behavior at the second move, because dispositional statements are "satisfied by narrated incidents" (page 125). To take Ryle's own example, the narrated incident which is "'John Doe has just been telephoning in French' satisfies what is asserted by the dispositional statement 'John Doe knows French'"; in such narrated incidents is its factual anchorage. So dispositional statements are "neither reports of observed or observable states of affairs, nor yet reports of unobserved or unobservable states of affairs." To suppose otherwise is to sponsor "the superstition that all true indicative sentences either describe existents or report occurrences," and on the basis of such superstition then to conclude that there is "something now going on," even though it is "going on, unfortunately, behind the scenes." (page 124).

### III. Is There Anything "Behind the Scenes"?

Now here for the religious reader is the crux of the whole book: is there anything "behind the scenes"? We might well deny—and I think we ought to deny—that "all true indicative sentences either describe existents or report occurrences" *essentially of the same kind and essentially in the same way*. The "states of affairs" about which dispositional statements talk, must *not* be thought of as "occult states of affairs"; that is a corollary from Section I above, and we may well agree. We may well agree that dispositions are not some ghostly caterpillars which on occasion rise to the surface to display butterfly behavior.

But having agreed with Ryle in making that denial, is there nothing "behind the scenes"? Ryle says he does not wish to deny any facts, so the question may be rephrased: Are there then any facts besides "what is observed," i.e. seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelt? Ryle does not make it clear whether he wishes to adopt only the less extreme view—that language must be of a more complex logic than

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that which the Cartesian "myth" suggests if it is to be appropriate to the facts, or whether he is asserting—more strongly—that there are no facts other than "what's seen," and so on. The religious philosopher can make no compromise with the second position; but the first position he may even welcome. Indeed, here for the religious philosopher is the crucial question. Here is the one ontological claim on which he cannot yield. *To have distinctively religious language at all, there must be situations not restricted to the spatio-temporal elements they contain.*

But granted this basis, what the religious person must remember again and again is that to express this claim will demand language that from a perceptual standpoint is logically odd. The religious man will only deny the very claim he wants to make if he expresses it in terms which are a mere duplication of perceptual language, characterized by no logical impropriety. Further, such terms will then sponsor a ghostly ontology of shadowy things which will do nothing better than generate the many dualisms which have haunted theological discourse; natural and supernatural; necessity and freedom; body and soul; human and divine; the world and God; time and eternity. When the religious person claims that there is something "behind the scenes" i.e. that certain situations are not exhausted by "what is perceived"; and further that such situations are those to which he would most characteristically appeal, he must without fail see that the language in which he expresses this claim is suitably improper, i.e. that its logic is, from the standpoint of perceptual language, suitably odd and complex. The "*supernatural*" must be no counterpart of the "*natural*"; "*freedom*" must not assert of one place what "*necessity*" denies of another; "*the soul*" must not describe some ghostly sort of 'thing' distinguished from material objects mainly in not being seen; "*God*" must not stand for an invisible President, King, Mikado, Potentate, Controller, of an equally invisible counterpart realm; "*eternity*" must not stand for a special sort of time. All such mistaken assimilations must be rejected. Instead, the distinctively theological words and phrases we have italicized must be given an appropriately odd logical placing, such a placing as will be found by plotting them in relation to the basic empirical claim of the religious philosopher, viz. the claim that there are situations more than the "*scenes*" which are part of them. In saying that, we are of course—as I have tried to make clear—developing only one side of a fundamental ambiguity in Ryle's book. But we can repeat yet again and without reservation the first of our two themes. Logical differences such as we have just exemplified, are all too easily assimilated and confused, and when confused convert themselves into puzzles that have bedevilled theological controversy under the guise of profound issues.

To elucidate the logical oddness that must of necessity belong to theological language; to display its logical mapping so as to show how its logical peculiarities are appropriate to the country it professes to describe—this must henceforward be a primary task of the philosophical theologian. So there arises the prospect of a new approach to theology which would use the methods and tools of logical

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empiricism rather than classical metaphysics with its traditional categories and all too detailed ontologies. Classical metaphysics for the most part uses categories, and phrases its systems, in language whose logical complexity we can only too easily overlook, and once we have overlooked such complexities there is no limit to the nonsense we can talk, or the confusions we can develop, all the time supposing our discussions to be "profound."

But with the new approach we shall dispense with all the ontological lumber that, passing for the elements of a Christian philosophy, may become only fuel to warm up controversy. No tears need be shed for those profound "objects" which have hitherto been thought to be open to inspection in the super-scientific laboratories of the metaphysicians—Substances, Accidents, Essences, Being, Potency, and above all that most intriguing of all specimens—visible only to the expert eyes of the fully-trained metaphysician—Nothing. I do not say that such words as I have just quoted are theologically worthless, but I do say that they must be given a logical placing very different from that which is traditionally read into them, when they become features of a countryside known only to ghosts who chance for the moment to inhabit machines.

For the Christian in particular, what Ryle's book suggests—and perhaps despite itself—is that we should approach Christian language, whether of the Bible or doctrine, or worship, realizing that it must be logically odd, and looking for its factual anchorage only in certain odd empirical situations. The Word of God is bogus if it does not utter logical improprieties.

So the Christian philosopher may welcome Ryle's book and the empirical development of which it is a landmark, in so far as it makes possible a new approach to traditional problems and controversies; an approach which first and foremost would be concerned with the logical impropriety which theological language must inevitably display, and whose primary task would be to elucidate such improprieties with reference to situations which are *more than* the "scenes" which they embody. It would recognize for example that such an impropriety as "Virgin Birth" stands for *more than* "biological parthenogenesis," as the "Cross" stands for *more than* a "Crucifixion"; and the "Resurrection" for *more than* an "empty tomb." When such logical concerns as these characterize the philosopher, the transition from philosophy to the Bible, Doctrine and Liturgy becomes easy and natural. Accordingly, philosophy of this kind might not only provide us with an empirically credible metaphysics, but because it fixes on the language of Bible, Doctrine and Liturgy it has a chance of being distinctively and comprehensibly Christian in a way which no previous philosophy has ever managed to be.

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